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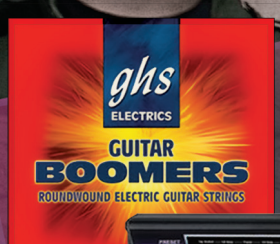

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From the editor

Doug Van Pelt

HOW CAN YOU HELP HM MAGAZINE IN THESE TIMES?

You already are helping HM Magazine. By subscribing or buying a copy in a retail store, you're helping us out in the midst of a slumping magazine industry and ... you've heard enough talk about the sinking music biz for awhile now. There is one other thing you could do to help us keep covering this great scene in print and online – you can reach out to the advertisers in these pages. Now, more than ever, it seems, ad sales are a huge, key role in HM Magazine's financial health. So, would you mind telling the advertisers that you saw their ad in HM? If they have a good product, consider supporting them with a purchase, too. Even if you don't buy something now, letting those people know that you care about HM and that you saw their ad in the magazine... That helps, big-time.

Okay, we're having a contest in three phases here (one with our weekly e-newsletter* and one at hmmag.com and one here in print); where 3 people can win a *Guitar Praise* video game. For more info, go to: hmmag.com/etc

* If you don't get our weekly e-newsletter, try it out. It's free, it's full of fresh music news, and you can unsubscribe by clicking on a link with any e-newsletter we send out. If you're worried that we'll give your email address away ... don't be. We hate spammers, too. We'll never give or sell your email address, period.

A new episode (#16) of the HM Magazine Podcast is out. This, too, is free. And speaking of free, we're giving away access to this new issue online (and all the back issues, too) – from now until July 1. It's just another way to invite a bunch of people to our party. (see details on p.55) Oh, and in case you weren't overwhelmed with free stuff already, every copy of this issue is polybagged with a free sampler CD from the band Corpus Christi (courtesy Victory Records).

You'll notice that there is no poster in this online edition. I mean, why bother? I have to say this, though:

This exclusive and extended (to 7 pages) **MxPx** interview is a must read!!!

We scored a deal with the MusicSkin people right at press time, by the way, which means you can get a customized HM Magazine skin for just about any electronic gadget you can think of. See our ad at the end of the extended MxPx story on page 41.

SPINNING AT HM NOW

U2	*No Line On The Horizon*	I love a band that keeps creating great art.
ANBERLIN	*New Surrender*	Call me a fan. I heart Anberlin.
JEREMY RIDDLE	*The Now And Not Yet*	Rich worship with musical & lyrical depth.
JARS OF CLAY	*The Long Fall Back To Earth*	I'm a fan now after their consistent excellence.
CRYPTACIZE	*Mythomania*	Multiple vocals that are fun and quirky.
BLUETREE	*God Of This City*	Worship created in a club/part-time brothel? Yes.
RED JUMPSUIT...	*Lonely Road*	I can't get enough of that song: "Godspeed."

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Letters to the Edit

A PLEA... NOT A GOTH BAND

What is up with that eyeliner and makeup in the Album Reviews section in the last issue?
–Gene, via internet

Ed – That's my bad. I tend to jack with the album cover art for the lead-off album review and that amateurish junk was my idea of a good time. I apologize for sharing it with the world.

WOMEN IN CHRISTIAN METAL

I just got this weird idea. With the recent passing of Kyle Sweet, I was thinking, what if you did a tribute mag to the women of Christian metal. It would drop around Mother's Day. You could interview women who are in bands or front bands. Maybe even interview some of the wives of band members to get their take. Maybe Charlotta could even drop some tasty info on you. Might be a nice honoring thing. Or is it not metal enough? You could call it "The Mother of All Issues." Well, just a thought I wanted to drop your way. It may even not be enough time to get it done.
–Robert Wilson, via internet

Ed – We grieve with Michael Sweet regarding the temporary loss of his wife. It is totally comforting to know that we'll see her again one day. That's a great idea for a special issue. We'll think about it.

THOSE COLUMNS... MMM BOY!

I meant to write this some time ago, but I kept forgetting about it. I wanted to say thank you for the various devotional columns you have in both *HM* and *Heaven's Metal*. Kemper Crabb, Chris Wighaman, Greg Tucker, and Steve Rowe always seem to write something thought provoking. These columns have, over time, become my favorite part of the magazines. Thanks for including them.
–Bill Schaaff, Lancaster, CA

Ed – Then I guess you'll be wondering, along with me, 'Where are Kemper's and Chris' columns?'

RED JUMPSUIT WHAT?

How do(es) the Red Jumpsuit Apparatus relate to this newsletter, or HM?
–Chris G, via e-newsletter

Ed – If the latest issue's article or album review don't answer it for you, perhaps the HM Podcast Episode 10 interview with Ronnie Winter will shed some light on that question.

WORTHLESS TOURING?

I've been a devoted reader of *HM* for some time and seeing the new bands and all never ceases to amaze me. I wish however, that you'd do an article about the economic crisis. More than half of these bands have to be crazy to be going on the road at this time, especially since many of the young bands are barely out of high school. They should be in school getting an education to prepare for the future, not worthlessly touring the country and going broke.
–Court Ellis, via internet

Ed – Wow! Tell us how you really feel! If you've been reading HM awhile, you'll remember our issue #104's cover story, "The Ugly Truth Behind Christian Rock," which got deep into economic issues. I guess the great theologians Slade & Quiet Riot said it best, "Mama, we're all crazy now."

AMERICA IS GREAT

What's up with the anti-American drivel on the back of the last HM edition? My fat American buttcheek awaits an apology! Naughty Monkey! I still love you guys... One of us fatties must've stole his cookie. I understand the statement, but OUCH! Scuse me for livin'! I get this vibe America owes the world an apology. I know our country has issues and we are spoiled, but too many folks want to wreck our country. It's home ... for now.
–Jason Smith, via internet

Ed – I agree. I just think that in-house criticism is fair, and even more valid. I'm American. I'm with ya, but let's take the harsh words together like men. I wrote it, but it rebukes me as much as anyone.

RED CD PROMOTION

We just rec'd our first issue of HM Mag and love it! Glad you advertised in the new Red CD, or I would have never heard of you. I am interested in the previous issue with Red on the cover, as well as others. Somehow I missed my log-in information. Could I get that?
–Beth Keur, via internet

Ed – You'll be glad to know that your online log-in password gives you access to all the available back issues for the duration of your sub.

HM

EDITOR/PUBLISHER **Doug Van Pelt**
OFFICE MANAGER **Charlotta Van Pelt**
MKTG & ADS **Erin Lee** (GyroscopeArts)

CONTR EDITORS **Kemper Crabb, Jamie Lee Rake, Greg Tucker, Nicholas Olson**

E-NEWS HOUND **Jason Irvin**

CONTRIBUTORS **Jon Arenz, Grace Cartwright, Matt Conner, Bear Frazer, Dan Frazier, Jonathan Harms, The Kern County Kid, Mike Hogan, Levi Macallister, Dan MacIntosh, Jamie Lee Rake, Mark Salomon, Andrew Schwab, Dr. Tony Shore, David Stagg, Charlie Steffens, Tyler Strickland, Brooke Waggoner, Carey Womack**

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David Schrott Pg. 64

PROOFREADERS **Kevan Lee, Levi Macallister, Valerie Maier, Carolyn Van Pelt**

SCRIPTURE "For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free – and we were all given the one Spirit to drink." (1 Corinthians 12:13)

MAILING ADDRESS PO Box 367
Hutto TX 78634

CUSTOMER SERVICE 877.897.0368
service@hmmag.com
FAX 512.535.1827

EDITORIAL dvanpelt@hmmag.com
MARKETING & ADS erin@gyroscopearts.com
615.739.7281

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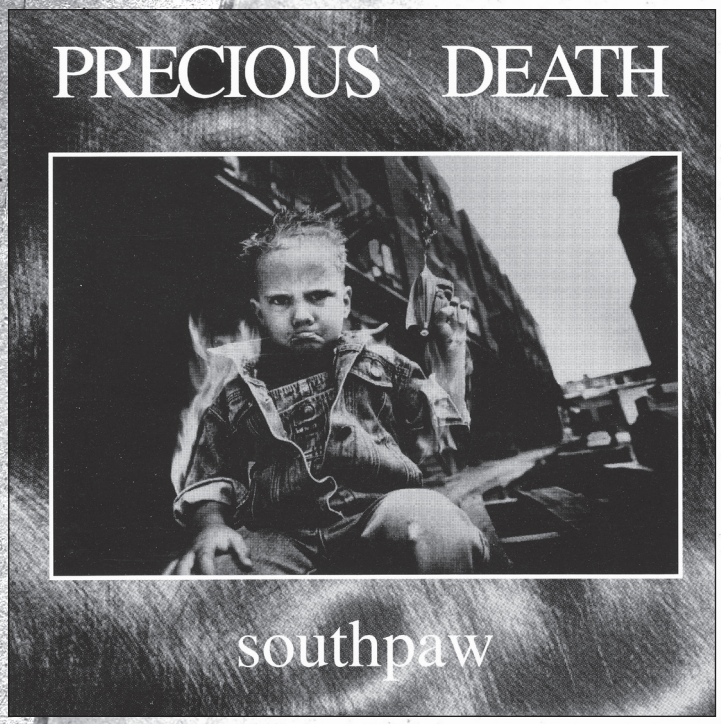
Classic Moments in Christian Rock history

BY DOUG VAN PELT



PRECIOUS DEATH

Southpaw

[1994 | Metro One]

Progress.

Southpaw was pretty much a watershed moment for Christian heavy metal. Precious Death simply took creativity up an extra notch (or several). The early 90s, as is well documented, was a great era for change – especially within the broadening field of hard music (where rock, metal and "alternative" got closer together while they distanced themselves at the same time). Precious Death somehow fused dashes of funk with progressive rock, tripped out jazz, and bone-crushing walls of metal riffs. It was like they were channelling powerhouses like Living Colour and Metallica, as well as the awe-inspiring musicianship and quirky playing of a Primus. Drummer Roger Sampson was all over the kit and hit with authority and power. Andy Koehler slapped his bass and kept big, huge grooves right in the pocket. David Bishop's guitar playing and tones were tasty and downright perfect. And Christopher Scott's lead vocals had a range that allowed him to scat one minute, wail like Chris Cornell or (gasp) Cher the next. I would say, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that this is one of the seminal, classic albums in Christian metal/rock history. "Talk About The Weather," the title track, "Shine" and "Hello" are all great tunes. "King Of Siam" is a highlight of their complexity. In the song "Force Fed" they would smash a television set with a baseball bat.

.

P.O.D.

Satellite

[2001 | Atlantic]

Epic. Historic. Amazing.

This album is one of those all-time greats. Christian rockers can only smile that something this good came from their own ranks. While *The Fundamental Elements Of Southtown* was their first major label release, this second one on Atlantic was produced by Howard Benson, sold millions, Sonny seemed to find his voice, and the band graduated (with honors) from the nu metal class into the rock and roll arena. Originally, the album was going to hit in the summer of 2001, but it ironically was postponed to September 11th. The band even played an outdoor show at Battery Park practically within the shadows of the twin towers just a few days prior. Many people have commented on how "Alive" was a single at just the right time for a nation in grief – offering a positive message at a traumatic time. No one could've picked a better band to spread a good message, that's for sure. Their album was both healing and amazingly good. Song after song stands out as memorable, classic tunes. "Youth Of A Nation" was written in a rehearsal garage the very day emergency vehicles were screaming up and down their street from a high school shooting near San Diego. It's a chilling tune that features a chorus of kids, not too unlike Pink Floyd's "Another Brick in the Wall." The song "Boom" still breathes and shakes with speaker-rattling power to this day. "Satellite" and "Thinking About Forever" seem to take a musically heavy and light, respectively, with Sonny lyrically coping with the loss of his mom in his teenage years. "Anything Right" has tons of attitude towards those that toss judgment their way, and "Ridiculous," with Eek-A-Mouse is one of the band's first great collaborations. Hard to top this one.

Look here for a couple classic, genre-changing albums highlighted each issue until we celebrate our 25th Anniversary in July, 2010; where we'll unveil a top-100 list of Christian rock's greatest albums of all time. Let the fighting begin [go to the message boards at ***hmmag.com***]

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENTS

Photo by: Heidi Ross

LAST ISSUE'S DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENTS SEGUES RIGHT INTO THIS ISSUE'S, BECAUSE ONE OF MARK REDDING'S SPOTLIGHTED ARTISTS WAS BROOKE WAGGONER, WHO WOWED US AT SXSW WITH A WONDERFUL SET. HERE SHE TURNS THE SPOTLIGHT ON SOME OF HER DESERVING PEERS.

<<Brooke Waggoner *myspace.com/brookewaggoner*

All of these guys are very dear friends of mine. And they're all SICK at what they do. Each one's an absolute genius! And every guy claims Christ and is a believer. All are based out of Nashville as well. One big happy family :)

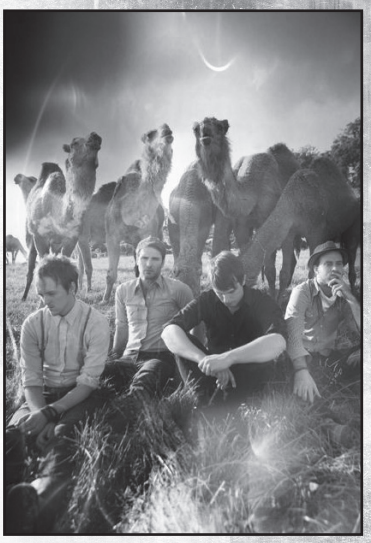


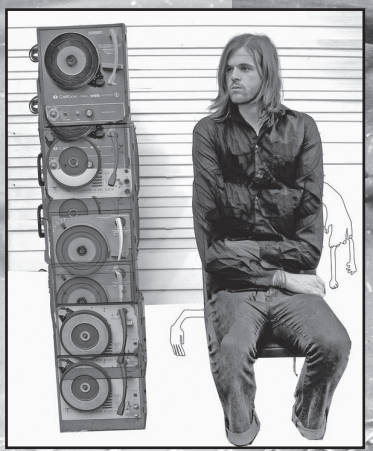
Photo by: Tec Petaja

Paper Route>>

These are some of my closest friends. Chad Howat (the brainchild and bass player in this band) produced and co-produced my EP and full-length album. JT Daly (frontman/singer in the band) did my EP artwork. Gavin (drummer in band) played drums a little bit on my last record. They recently got a major deal with Warner Bros. We all toured together this past July. They've been touring non-stop ever since (with bands like Paramore, Phantom Planet, Barcelona, and are currently in the UK about to tour with Passion Pit soon, as well...).
paperrouteonline.com

Disappointed by Candy>>

Also some of my closest friends. Jeremy is my drummer and has played most all of the drums on both of my records. Gabe, guitar/vocals/keys in band, plays bass with me as well. (they played with me at CMJ this year...) These guys do a ton of session work in Nash, as well as play rhythm for Jars of Clay (that's basically their bread and butter for the time being). They approach music from a classical background (probably why we all get along so well). This project (DBC) is their baby and they put all of their extra time (which isn't much) into it. They are completely independent. The feel of the live show is very similar to Air...
disappointedbycandy.com



Canon Blue>>

This guy is a good friend as well. His real name is Daniel James Brigham and he's mostly a one-man show (with a drummer as well, sometimes). I got him to open up for me at my CD-release show this summer and he was ridiculously good! He's on an indie label based out of Denmark, called Rumraket. He's in with the whole Grizzly Bear crew as well (I think Chris from that band ended up working on his record). Christian Vogel (mixes/masters a lot of Radiohead's stuff) also mixed / mastered Dan's record. He's so good!
myspace.com/canonblue

The Champion and His Burning Flame>>

I met these guys when I recorded bgv stuff for a project of theirs a year or so ago... They're so nice! And really great. They record a lot of their stuff really old-school (old "digital" devices, tape, etc..) It's definitely got an Elliot Smith vibe, but they put a really cool twist on it.
myspace.com/thechampionandhisburningflame

Photo by: Casey Brooks

Photo: Timm Ziegenthaler

Future Of Forestry

BY MATT CONNER

Leave it to the inventive Eric Owyoung to develop yet another intriguing idea. The front man and songwriter for Future of Forestry (formerly Something Like Silas) holds a solid musical reputation for his layered guitar schemes and soaring Euro-tinged melodies, and this next step for FoF anticipates adding to that résumé.

For those anxiously awaiting fresh material from the California act, the next several months offer some good news. *Travel* is the first EP in a series of three, aptly titled *Travel II* and *Travel III*, all designed to flow around the theme of movement in varied forms of air, land and water respectively. It's a concept Owyoung is excited about, especially with the ability to musically expand his sound outside of the typical guitar structures.

"I feel like the emphasis of the songs is more in the songwriting, whereas before it was the music that was driving things, so the songs were written out of the music," explains Owyoung. "This one will be the opposite. Things are coming out of the lyrics and we're adding more solid songs. We've been known for layering more sounds and being inventive in that way. A lot of the last album, *Twilight*, was guitar layers. We've played around with a lot of instruments since then. We toured with a vibraphone, a glockenspiel and other instruments like the saw – like a saw that you would saw wood with. So there's a lot of layers of unique instrumentation on this album."

The *Travel* installments hit (virtual) store shelves in May, September and January and Owyoung hopes the new instrumentation and thematic elements excite longtime fans and attract new ones. And while it might take some off guard, ultimately the proof lies in a more mature songwriting process and finely honed craft.

"All I can say is that I hope as artists that we're always growing," says Owyoung. "I think this is just another growth step for me, songwriting wise. I can look at these melodies and lyrics and say, 'Wow, this is better than the last album.' I would hope you could say that for every album, but I don't think that's true. Sometimes you write an album and then you write a new one and look back and realize that it wasn't better. But I think these songs are hitting me as a little bit stronger than the last ones."

MxPx played a benefit show in late January for their late comrade **John Spalding**, guitarist for bands **90 Pound Wuss** and **Raft of Dead Monkeys**. John passed away last month from lung cancer.

Ron McClelland, bassist for the popular Christian recording band **StorySide:B**, collapsed and died suddenly from an apparent undiagnosed heart condition on January 18th while on a cruise with his wife as part of Jacksonville, Florida's 88.1 The Promise radio listener appreciation trip. McClelland, who was playing basketball when he lost consciousness, was not able to be revived.

Michael Sweet's wife, **Kyle**, passed away in March after a long bout with cancer.

Peter Case underwent open-heart surgery in January, but is struggling with the medical bills. Hidden Love [hiddenlovemedicalrelief.com] is a benefit by his friends to help him out.

Seventh Day Slumber hopes to provide a tool of praise in a relevant way with their new album, *Take Everything*. "We wanted people who wouldn't normally listen to worship music to hear it in a way that's relevant to them," frontman **Joseph Rojas** says. "We were going through our iPods listening to a heavy riff from Underoath one minute and "How Great Is Our God" in a standard worship format the next, and subconsciously started taking those traditional worship songs and making them heavier."

Bluetree wrote the song "God Of This City" while on stage performing worship songs in the Climax Bar, a club which doubles as a brothel in the Red Light district of Pattaya, Thailand. "Growing up in Belfast means that we've grown used to people crying in church, begging God to change our city," says lead singer/guitarist **Aaron Boyd**. "I don't know whether you become numb to it all, but I do know that I had never really had those kind of feelings for a particular place. It all changed that night in Pattaya. The feelings of compassion took over and I started just to sing out what I knew was true about who God is to the people of the city."

HARDNEWS
Page fourteen

BONUS ALBUM REVIEWS

GRAVE FORSAKEN
THIS DAY FORTH

Grave Forsaken's third album continues the retro-thrash stylings the band is known for, leaving off any death metal influence and reminding one of a day when thrash was born from the marriage of the heaviness of metal and the pace of punk rock. In fact, vocalist Tim Steadman reminds me of a mix of Living Sacrifice-era DJ and early Crashdog spitter Spike Nard. The raw production values suit the music, although there are a few weak moments that seem to have gotten passed over in the mixing/editing process. Lyrically, the band is in fine form. It's refreshing to hear a band leave the abstract poetry behind in favor of blatant, in-your-face evangelistic rants. The band's clearest influence is still Mortification, but fans of the Living Sacrifice debut or Vengeance Rising will also appreciate this. ~~[SOUNDMASS] LOYD HARP~~

IONA
LIVE IN LONDON

After at least two concert albums, one of which was a double disc set just as *Live in London* is, what can Chirstendom's (and the rest of the world's?) premiere Celtic prog rockers do to make an audio document of a show unique? Apart from being their own singular selves and between-song patter soaked in dry wit, they include three songs that had yet to be studio recorded at the time of this '04 date in England's capitol. One of those, "Island of Magnificent Souls," not only arguably has the proggiest title in Iona's catalog, but also their greatest radio single potetnial in years. Otherwise, fans of the often poetically scriptural quintet know what to expect. Virtuosic instrumental passages with melodoies that soar and wind, singer-songwriter Joanne Hogg's beautiffic pipes...it's all almost redundantly excellent. Among my favorite moments are those when they explore grooves that link their Celtic roots to Middle Eastern sounds. Perhaps it's not the longplayer by which to introduce newbies to Iona (and prog rock altogether), but anyone who enjoys soulful, virtuosic music will surely find moments by which to drop a jaw during its 100+ minutes. ~~[OPEN SKY] JAMIE LEE RAKE~~

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News bullets

Black / death / thrash metal band **Divulgence** just signed with Bombworks Records. Each member of the band is 18 years old or less.

Soundmass just signed Norway's **Roots of Tragedy**.

Disciple will team up with label mates **Skillet** and **Decyfer Down** for a 32+ city tour starting in early April for the *Comatose Spring 2009 Tour*.

15 years after its initial groundbreaking release, **Starflyer 59**'s seminal debut full-length is finally being reissued on vinyl for the very first time on Crossroads of America Records.

Copeland is on a US headlining tour to with This Providence, **Paper Route** and **Brooke Waggoner**.

The brutal progressive/melodic death metallers, **Krig** (Brazil), are now independently releasing their full length, *Target: Human, Mission: Destroy*.

Collective Soul, who recently signed a worldwide deal with Loud & Proud Records/Roadrunner Records, have begun work on their 8th studio release, the first release for the label. At press time, the band confirmed to headline a special benefit concert for the Save Darfur Coalition in Atlanta.

Inpop/Aware/Columbia Records singer-songwriter **Mat Kearney** will release his third studio project, *City of Black & White*, on May 19, 2009.

Stavesacre has announced that they are scheduled to play the Encore stage on July 2nd at Cornerstone 2009.

Showbread is hard at work on their next project, tentatively titled *The Fear Of God*, which should be recorded in April.

As soon as **The Fallen** released their 11-song debut album, *Between The Devil And The Deep Blue Sea*, they headed back into the studio to work on the second release, *Between The Angels And The Deep Dark Sky*.

Photo: Emily Haselschwerdt

Welcome Wagon

BY MATT CONNER

Vito Aiuto didn't set out to make a "real record."

Of course, when you're friends with Sufjan Stevens and he's pushing you to make one, you allow such things to move forward. Still Vito and his wife Monique primarily think of themselves as leaders of a Presbyterian church plant in Brooklyn, so this whole professional recording artist thing is a bit new to them.

The humble demeanor comes across even while talking to HM about their Asthmatic Kitty debut, *Welcome to the Welcome Wagon*. The 12 songs present are unabashedly Christian in both content and musical heritage, yet surprisingly the disc has been praised by critics and fans all over. Then again, it might help that it sounds so much like a Sufjan album that some mistook it for a possible side project.

"This is all so brand new to me," explains Aiuto. "Making this record was just something that we evaluated as a good use of our time and it's certainly something enjoyable and we love the people that we worked with. So we answered the question based upon what we want the mission of our family to be and the mission of our lives. And for us, that's to follow Jesus and to enjoy people and use the gifts that God has given us. So this was something we thought was a wise way to do it. It wasn't that clinical, but it was something we thought as to whether it was a good investment of our time or not."

Adjusting their schedules as both parents of a young child and pastor and wife of a growing urban congregation hasn't been easy, but Aiuto says they're learning to take it all in stride. The main priority is to remain committed to the work they're involved with in their neighborhood and church, regardless of the attention of the press or the positive reviews Welcome Wagon is receiving.

"I'm not thinking that far ahead in terms of the music," explains Aiuto. "Then again, that's not my main vocation. I'm really just thinking about a second service for our church. We meet in the evening and we're starting to outgrow our space, so we want to serve people who cannot necessarily come in the evening. You have to say no to good things in order to say yes to other good things, so music has to take a backseat at this point."

The recently reformed **Seventh Angel** signed to Bombworks Records.

Melodic metal band **Destruction of a Rose**, hailing from Las Vegas, NV has announced that they have signed with Standby Records. The band will soon enter Lambesis Studios with **Tim Lambesis** and Daniel Castleman (Impending Doom, Underneath the Gun) to record their Standby Records' debut EP, due out early summer. Then they'll hit the road with No Bragging Rights in April and Planes Crash in June.

Japanese Christian Rock band, **IMARi ToNES**, recently signed with Atlanta-based Empty Vessel Music.

Kevin Max's wife **Amanda** has given birth to their third child, **Knightly Christobal Max**, who came into the world at 9:23 p.m. on March 24, 2009.

The new **Earth From Above** album, *Numbered With The Transgressors*, will release in mid-April.

Philmont is hitting the road with **This Beautiful Republic** and **Abandon**.

Mute Math has finally released some new music (see review this issue), on the *Spotlight* EP. A limited-edition vinyl 12" pressing will become available on their site as well.

Makeshift3 has posted their newest songs from their 4th album on their web site [makeshift3.com].

Going to the Grammys was "...truly a career and even lifetime highlight for us," stated **After Edmund** band member Yates. "It's inspiring to be around that level of talent and to meet artists who have influenced our lives and musical paths, and it makes us want to strive harder to make great music for the world to enjoy."

Metal Mind Production presents a CD audio version of the latest **Solitude Aeturnus** DVD, *Hour Of Despair*.

Norma Jean is one of the bands featured in photographer Jeremy Saffer's book, *Bring The Noise*.

HARDNEWS
Page sixteen

Enough Already!

BY JAMIE LEE RAKE

DANIEL AMOS receives some vindication for their place in the new wave canon via a deluxe re-issue from a label (Arena Rock Recording Co.) not usually found at the local Bible & Gift. DA's *Fearful Symmetry*, the band's 1987 extended rumination on humanity's inability to articulate God's enormity, has aged well: intellectually and theologically incisive, spacious in its often angular soundscape, and sufficiently danceable. Second disc includes a Terry Taylor interview, bonus tracks galore and video goodies.

Were I DJing soul gospel/disco dances, **BISHOP DAVID G. EVANS**' *Presents Automatic Praise Live!* (Abundant Harvest) would be worth purchasing for about a quarter of its cuts. Not wanting to produce merely another stomping 'n' swaying choral gospel longplayer, however, Evans presents (because, he apparently doesn't sing) inspirational cCm and even patriotic country on the same record. Reflective of his own tastes or only reflecting his congregation's? Either way, give Evans credit for throwing credible curve balls and probably surprising unsuspecting gospel fans.

DEBORAH SMITH POLLARD examines other trends in African-American sacred music in her book of essays, *When The Church Becomes Your Party* (Wayne State University Press). Her perspective as Christian/fan/radio announcer/scholar gives her a uniquely informed perspective on the musical-social culture that continues to influence popular culture. Of most interest to this column's readership may be her look at holy hip-hop and the rise of praise & worship repertoire in black churches, but her looks at the evolution of appropriate dress for singing ministers and the growth of the gospel stageplay phenomenon enlighten as well.

One interview with him not long before his 2008 death impresses that **BO DIDDLEY** was on the right side of the Almighty upon his demise. That's reason enough, along with its inclusion of some experimentation with gospel structural conceits, to recommend *Road Runner: The Chess Masters 1959-1960* (Hip-0 Select/Geffen). It's the second of a series of limited-edition, double-CD retrospectives covering the early work of the man whose square-bodied guitars and deceptively nerdy glasses combined with a catholicity of influences to make him a black punk rocker long before The Bad Brains.

JULIO REY may be best known to HM-ophiles of longstanding as the force behind The Lead and Frank's Enemy, among other bands. But his solo career extends over a quarter-century (wow!), too. *Understand the Words* (Not Silent) finds Rey in an aggro-folkie mood, wailing on his acoustic axe like he would pummel an electric guitar in his musically harder acts. His musings, and the eclectic accompaniment on about half the 20 tracks, goes all over the political/spiritual/familial map. Rey quite nicely fills the "godly Cuban-American Libertarian sounding a bit like ramshackle Lou Reed" niche you didn't know your collection lacked.

If you're my friend, you wouldn't make me do it by myself, would you? Amass treasures to turn you on to in my next column, that is. Send them on CD, vinyl, tape, MP3, etc. to P.O. Box 29;Waupun, WI 53963 U.S.A. If you're looking forward to the next installment, I'm not alone.

News bullets

Raging Storm Records signed Washington, DC-based **Under Command**. Lead singer and guitarist **Wayne Johnson** was also recently featured in a *Guitar Player Magazine* reader's poll as one of 2008's top rising guitar players. Talks with Raging Storm Records prompted the band to re-enter the studio and begin work on the new all original project, *Back In The Thick*. Under Command will be appearing at the Cornerstone Festival.

YoungSide Records will now distribute all Maanalainen Levykauppa/Bullroser Records artist productions – including **HB**, **Deuteronomium**, **Random Eyes**, **Pain Remains**, Sacrecy, **Sotahuuto** and *Scandinavian Metal Praise*. "America will have greater access to some of Europe's most talented bands," YoungSide's Arlene Marais commented.

Stars Go Dim won the Mayercraft Contest. SGD will play alongside John Mayer and a handful of other talented artists on cruise ship to Cabo San Lucas for 4 nights. In addition to this awesome experience, they also received a full Ernie Ball endorsement, and Hurley products.

Jars of Clay release its tenth studio album, *The Long Fall Back To Earth*, on April 21.

Following in the footsteps of **Bob Hartman** and **Brad Noah**, **Newsboys** frontman **Peter Furler** will no longer front the band in concert. **Michael Tait** will be touring with the band as lead singer with Peter making special appearances throughout the year and working with the band in the studio.

DecembeRadio are joining the Newsboys (and **VOTA** and **Bread of Stone**) for the 35-city *Join the Tribe tour*. Bassist/vocalist **Josh Reedy** says, "It's really cool for us to be a part of a tour with a band that we grew up watching. I know it will be a night of great music, energy and ministry." DecembeRadio just released a video for the song "Look for Me."

A **Plea For Purging** is on the *We've Created A MonsTOUR* with **Burden of a Day**, **The Great Commission**, Broadcast the Nightmare, We Came As Romans, and This or the Apocalypse.

LIVE REPORT

SXSW 2009
March 13 - 22

BY DOUG VAN PELT

AUSTIN, TX – South By Southwest was amazing this year. Even if people were talking about "this economy" a lot on the Trade Show floor, they were all rocking out at the clubs. This year, perhaps more than ever, the Interactive portion was bulging at the seams, ever pushing the techno-envelope. There were plenty of good movies, too. Here's a small taste of what your intrepid editor took in. *(see lots more at hmmag.com/blogs/doug)*

Movies: On opening night I saw ***I Love You, Man*** and ***Exterminators*** back-to-back and they were so funny that it was almost unfair to the first that I saw the second so soon. ***Trimpin*** was an amazing documentary about a genius/sculptor/musician guy that crafts super-creative displays that play. ***Wake Up*** was a documentary about a guy that started seeing angels and demons and it drove him to action. ***The Haunting In Connecticut*** was a horror movie based upon true events of the supernatural, and the real-life mother that told the story showed up for a Q&A afterwards. ***Anvil*** was a curious documentary that felt like part comedy a la *Spinal Tap*, where it almost felt like it was parody, part blind ambition a la *American Idol*, and part *School of Rock* for the love of metal. And ***Iron Maiden: Flight 666*** left no doubt that it was a serious heavy metal concert film.

Music: The week was full of "special" performances – lots of them, but the one that stood out to me the most was one put on by **The Lee Boys**. They were jamming to their pedal steel guitar sounds (a la Robert Randolph & the Family Band) and really rockin' the joint. Then they invited a genuine bluegrass band (with a historic pedigree, no less) – **The Travelin' McCourys** – to jam with them. They actually shared songs with each other and adapted each other's tunes as their own. It was top-notch improvisation in real-time. Too cool! **Viva Voce** played a terrific set (with a full band), where **Anita Robinson** showed her prowess as a world class lead guitar player. **Seabird** finished things up late on the first (Wednesday) night of the music fest, filling a small room and a postage-stamp-of-a-stage with a lilting, swirling and organic sound.

Like lots of artists making the trek to Austin, **Flatfoot 56** played several sets throughout the week. We caught them on an outdoor stage put on by Texas Rockfest (one of several non-sanctioned indie outfits that takes advantage of the several thousand add'l people in the city for this) and they quickly turned a curious crowd into an "oi" shouting and dancing bunch. **Brooke Waggoner** packed a medium-sized room with her doesn't-need-amplification voice, piano, string section and back-up singer. It was obvious why she has such a great reputation as an artist. Her voice and songs are awesome. **Anberlin** actually rocked a set that started after 2:30 am! The songs "Breaking" and "The Resistance" sounded very edgy, bright, and energetic. They saved "Feel Good Drag" as the last song at both sets I saw during the week, which the crowd ate up. **Shiny Toy Guns** played in one of the better rooms, sound and light-wise, due in part to it being filmed and broadcast live by Direct TV. It was interesting to hear an edited version of "Le Disko."

The Shackeltons reminded me of the first few times I saw mewithoutYou, because the music was an ever-flowing (and solid) backdrop to an uber-charismatic frontman (**Mark Redding**) that you couldn't take your eyes off. I felt like an edgy in-the-know media guy for having him write the last issue's "Declaration of Independents" feature. This band will totally win lots of new fans every time they play. **Frodus** reunited to play a rare and too-short set on the last day of the fest, as did **Family Force 5** over at Emo's for a big showcase party. Anberlin's **Stephen Christian** and **Christian McAlhaney** donned acoustic guitars and barstools for an **Anchor & Braille** set for a showcase by To Write Love On Her Arms.

For a week, the music industry felt real healthy. Hmm...

Clockwise from top: "The Doctor" w/The Lee Boys and The Travelin' McCourys; Anchor & Braille; Flatfoot 56; Seabird; Viva Voce's Anita Robinson. [Photos by Doug Van Pelt]

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENTS

Photo by: Heidi Ross

LAST ISSUE'S DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENTS SEGUES RIGHT INTO THIS ISSUE'S, BECAUSE ONE OF MARK REDDING'S SPOTLIGHTED ARTISTS WAS BROOKE WAGGONER, WHO WOWED US AT SXSW WITH A WONDERFUL SET. HERE SHE TURNS THE SPOTLIGHT ON SOME OF HER DESERVING PEERS.

<<Brooke Waggoner *myspace.com/brookewaggoner*

All of these guys are very dear friends of mine. And they're all SICK at what they do. Each one's an absolute genius! And every guy claims Christ and is a believer. All are based out of Nashville as well. One big happy family :)

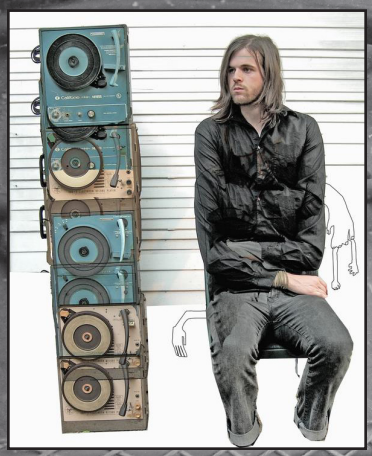
Photo by: Tec Petaja

Paper Route>>

These are some of my closest friends. Chad Howat (the brainchild and bass player in this band) produced and co-produced my EP and full-length album. JT Daly (frontman/singer in the band) did my EP artwork. Gavin (drummer in band) played drums a little bit on my last record. They recently got a major deal with Warner Bros. We all toured together this past July. They've been touring non-stop ever since (with bands like Paramore, Phantom Planet, Barcelona, and are currently in the UK about to tour with Passion Pit soon, as well...).
paperrouteonline.com

Disappointed by Candy>>

Also some of my closest friends. Jeremy is my drummer and has played most all of the drums on both of my records. Gabe, guitar/vocals/keys in band, plays bass with me as well. (they played with me at CMJ this year...) These guys do a ton of session work in Nash, as well as play rhythm for Jars of Clay (that's basically their bread and butter for the time being). They approach music from a classical background (probably why we all get along so well). This project (DBC) is their baby and they put all of their extra time (which isn't much) into it. They are completely independent. The feel of the live show is very similar to Air...
disappointedbycandy.com



Canon Blue>>

This guy is a good friend as well. His real name is Daniel James Brigham and he's mostly a one-man show (with a drummer as well, sometimes). I got him to open up for me at my CD-release show this summer and he was ridiculously good! He's on an indie label based out of Denmark, called Rumraket. He's in with the whole Grizzly Bear crew as well (I think Chris from that band ended up working on his record). Christian Vogel (mixes/masters a lot of Radiohead's stuff) also mixed / mastered Dan's record. He's so good!
myspace.com/canonblue

Photo by: Casey Brooks

The Champion and His Burning Flame>>

I met these guys when I recorded bgv stuff for a project of theirs a year or so ago... They're so nice! And really great. They record a lot of their stuff really old-school (old "digital" devices, tape, etc..) It's definitely got an Elliot Smith vibe, but they put a really cool twist on it.
myspace.com/thechampionandhisburningflame

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CORPUS CHRISTI

Photo: T.Foiles

BY JON ARENZ

What expectations are set for a kid whose dad is a Christian preacher? Some kids in that situation rebel against their parents and others would just follow in their footsteps. Jarrod Christman, guitarist and clean vocals for the metal band Corpus Christi, did a little of both by rebelling a bit and discovering metal. Now he is living and sharing his faith through the same type of music that led him down that rebellious path.

Corpus Christi, which is rounded out by Jon Pauly on guitars, Phil Smith on bass, vocalist Will Henry and Justin Evans on drums, is the spawn of a few friends who had similar interests in God and the darker side of music. Christman says that he grew up listening to bands like Queen, U2, and eventually Metallica and Guns N' Roses, but it wasn't until the grunge era passed that he found his true passion for music – extreme metal.

It was through some friends, fellow preachers' sons, that Christman was introduced to bands like In Flames, Zao, Living Sacrifice, At The Gates, Dark Tranquility, and Emperor. Eventually Christman's love for God and extreme metal, led to him dropping out of college and concentrating on music full time. That is when Corpus Christi entered into the world like a bomb.

Though they are relatively new to the metal scene, they have built a strong foundation by using (and sometimes over-using) technology, namely MySpace and YouTube. "We try to send out MySpace bulletins to the point of annoyance. I'm not going to apologize for trying to promote my band," Christman said.

With their debut, *The Darker Shade of White,* released by Victory Records, Corpus Christi has gone from a local Cincinnati band to a national act. To top things off, the record was produced by Ken Susi of Unearth, perhaps helping the masses to see that these boys are legit. Though there may be similarities to the producer's band as well as others, Corpus Christi does not sound like a copycat. *The Darker Shade of White* is a brutal testament to Jesus Christ (lyrically as well as musically), yet still subtle enough to blend into the world without people thinking the band is comprised of a bunch of Bible thumpers, which Christman says is a common misconception of Christian bands.

The track, "Parade of Scars," ignites the album with full-on metalcore fury with tons of double bass and galloping guitars to go along with the mostly screamed vocals. On the other hand, "Fight For Your King" has what Christman describes as more of a rock/metal feel, which may draw some comparisons to the band Atreyu.

With a record deal and a solid album in tow, these guys have to be planning for future rock stardom, right? Wrong. Their preparations for the future… take it one day at a time and remain thankful for what they have achieved thus far. "A lot of younger bands get into this business and think that there is a lot more rock star than there really is. It is not glamorous. On our last tour we rode into a Wal-Mart parking lot (to sleep in the van for the night) and it's 3 am and freezing, we are all hungry and dirty and I looked at the other guys and said, 'You know what? We may be in a Wal-Mart parking lot, but we don't have to be at work tomorrow, we could NOT have a record deal, we could NOT be touring, this isn't too bad.'" Christman laughs. An optimistic outlook separates these guys from the rest of the pack.

myspace.com/corpuschristiad

Not sorry for promoting corpus christi

AS CITIES BURN

Album: *Hell or High Water*
Label: Tooth & Nail
Release Date: April 21, 2009
Members: Cody Bonnette, vocals/guitar; Colin Kimble, bass; Aaron Lunsford, percussion; Chris Lott, guitar

myspace.com/ascitiesburn

On working with Brad Wood (Smashing Pumpkins, Pete Yorn, Liz Phair):

"Brad produced records for mewithoutYou in the past. We are on the same label and had the same A&R guy, Chad Johnson. He hooked it up. [Brad] is just mixing it. I produced it with the help of a few friends of mine, who play in bands and/or work in different studios: Tyler Orr, Robert Chisolm, Jae Ham, and Tyler Schwindt." *—Cody Bonnette*

On the new songs:

"I was tired of writing songs that had so many parts and changes. I just like listening to music that has a groove and makes you bob your head. And I wanted to play guitar less." *—CB*

On being a band effort:

"Though I wrote most of the CD when I was away from the band, they still contributed and helped finely tune it. I would say it is very much theirs, unless you ask them and they tell you otherwise." *—CB*

On the ultimate hopes for ACB:

"The dream is to never break up, eventually start to suck more and more, and fade away." *—CB*

INTERVIEW: MATT CONNER

BURDEN OF A DAY

BY MATT CONNER

What does a band do when it loses the very "heart" of it all? You'd think that would amount to a rough transition and a lot of confusion, to say the least. Yet to talk to the members of Burden of a Day, you'd never know anything chaotic ever took place.

Last fall, the aforementioned heart departed in the form of vocalist Kendall Knepp's exit from the band. The longtime singer served as not only the front man of the band, but was also instrumental in forming the incredible fanbase the Sarasota hardcore act enjoys.

"You can't just describe Kendall as the frontman for Burden, because he was so much more than that," says new vocalist Kyle Tamosaitis. "He was so charismatic and had the ability to connect with everyone he met. He instantly became friends with everyone and was always willing to talk to anyone. So they were big shoes to fill."

Yet as Tamosaitis explains, it was that same fanbase cultivated by Knepp that became so accepting of the new vocalist. For many bands, the transition would lead to high levels of tension or drama or, in some cases, a complete split. Instead, it became even more of a reason for the band to appreciate their audience.

"I will never forget my first show in New Jersey," explains Tamosaitis. "It's still one of my favorite places to play, but that first night I had butterflies all over my body. I was so nervous before that first song; but, as soon as we started, I realized we would be okay. The fans have been so accepting since the beginning and that's made a world of difference."

Burden of a Day fans might be wondering what the new album will bring for their second Rise Records release. When HM caught them, two weeks of recording and another week of editing still remained, so the final sound was not yet captured. But with a new vocalist comes a new sound – one that Tamosaitis describes as completely different. "Obviously, this is my first record with the band, but everyone keeps talking about how different this time around is. I know the musical difference between the first album [*Pilots & Paper Airplanes*] and this one is black and white. They are completely different."

The band's self-described sound on *Pilots* was hardcore pop, a reference to an aggressive yet approachable sound. This time around, Tamosaitis says the emphasis is placed more on the pop sound with a stronger focus on melodies that you can sing along to. Yet for those worried that Burden of a Day might take too far of a left turn, Tamosaitis believes everyone will be pleased. It's the band's live show and passion that are such a staple and those aren't going anywhere, even with the line-up changes.

"When I first came in, I didn't even want to be like Kendall, because there was no way I could fill his spot. I would lose if I tried to be like him. Instead, I didn't want that pressure and I just wanted to be me. Of course, we have completely different singing styles and performance styles, so people should expect some things to be different. And when you bring a new member into a band, that will change some things. But the one thing that Kendall and I have in common is that we're both extremely passionate and that's what people can continue to expect."

myspace.com/burdenofaday

Everything and nothing changes

MIKE FARRIS

BY DAN MACINTOSH

You might say Mike Farris has taken it from the studio to the stage, because he has followed up his *Salvation in Lights* studio album with *Shout! Live*, a concert release. Many may fondly recall Farris' work with the rock band, Screamin' Cheetah Wheelies. Others might know him best for his time fronting the post-Stevie Ray Vaughan Double Trouble. But to hear Farris describe his musical direction these days, that old, hard phase is little more than a memory to him now.

"Everything, from here on out, has got to be rooted in that old spiritual kind of setting," Farris explains. And when Farris refers to "old spiritual" sounds, he's talking about familiar gospel songs, like "Oh Mary Don't You Weep" and "Precious Lord Take My Hand."

"If I can just get my hands on those core elements and pull them in every now and then and flavor what I'm wantin' to do, that's exciting to me."

Upon first glance, it may appear a little odd to release a live album so soon after what was essentially Farris' Christian market debut. Yet *Salvation in Lights* was only the beginning of this music's evolution.

"When we went and recorded it (*Salvation in Lights*), we just recorded it straight out of my head, through these musicians that played on the record," Farris says. "So, the songs didn't get a chance to develop in any kind of form with a band playing 'em. Songs take a totally different shape when you hand them over to people and they play 'em for a period of time – a year. It usually takes a year to get 'em really good and rich. I thought it'd be really good, since the difference in the way they sound live now is so dramatic; I thought it'd be a great idea to just record the songs from *Salvation in Lights* live and just document it."

This is not to say, however, that Farris likes these songs one way better than another. Instead, there are now two separate presentations of essentially the same material, and both takes have their own unique values.

"It's just different," says Farris. "I love the way they developed, but I love the album, too. I think the album came out way beyond what I ever even dreamed. But then now, they've developed live to where there's a whole other kind of electricity to them. So, to me, they're equally beautiful."

Few styles of music do a better job with celebrating life's victories better than black gospel music, and Farris has plenty of reasons to be especially joyful these days. Back during his rock days, he was also abusing drugs and alcohol and honestly didn't even know what it felt like to perform sober until just a few years ago. But he feels so good now, it's a shame he wasted all those years in a chemically-induced haze.

"My life is just so good and so enriched," he says now. "I just couldn't imagine going back to that. I love my life and I'm grateful for it. It's a whole different world. When you're young, you think you're really immersed in it; you're really doing something. Any pro, anybody who's worth their salt, they're not going to get up there wasted and try and perform. It's impossible to be at the top of your game like that. I love being aware of everything that's going on around me."

Of course, there's more to sobriety than just being a better live musician.

"I love the little things in life now, like actually being dependable," he adds, only half-joking. "If I'm late now, I'm only ten minutes late, as opposed to a couple hours."

With his repertoire of powerful gospel sounds, which are filled with comforting words for our troubled times, Mike Farris is absolutely right on time with *Shout! Live*.

mikefarrismusic.net

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REFUSING TO BE SILENCED

BY DOUG VAN PELT

"BRINGING UP THE RIGHT SUBJECT CAN GET A PERSON EXCITED. WHETHER IT'S SPORTS TO A FANATIC OR BABIES TO A NEW PARENT, THE CONVERSATION GENERATES DILATED PUPILS AND STIMULATES RAPID SPEECH REACTION. SUCH WAS THE CASE WHEN BRINGING UP HEARING GOD'S VOICE WITH FOR TODAY'S VOCALIST, MATTIE MONTGOMERY.

Photo: Mike Rice

He sat up in his chair and smiled, like the isolated guy in a room full of strangers, latching on to the one person he's got something in common with. "The coolest question anyone's ever asked me, probably, in my whole life – let alone an interview!" he enthused. "I was just talking to a dude about this yesterday.

"I think God is romantic and God'll drop little hints here and there to get your attention that were specifically designed with you in mind."

The things you've heard about this band are probably true. Without waving it around like a badge of pride, this group of 5 guys (Montgomery; Mike Reynolds and Ryan Leitru on guitars; Brandon Leitru on bass; and David Morrison on drums) are consistently flying the flag of Spirit-filled hardcore with a hardcore intensity and a death metal brutality. A For Today concert will many times inspire some of the most frenzied and kinetic hardcore dancing turned worship that you'll see.

Just in case you weren't convinced about Montgomery's passion, another sign that someone is clearly focused about something is how readily they're able to give an answer, and also how fast and concise it's delivered. When posed with the, "What is the Spirit of God telling us today" question, he didn't hesitate to rattle off a paragraph:

"Wake up. I think the book of Joel is what God is saying to us today. I think God is calling us to wake up, because lives are literally hanging in the balance. God is screaming to the church that we need to become the living, breathing, manifestation of a God that nobody really believes in anymore. We need to start walking in authority and in confidence and in victory and in freedom all the time. And when the world is falling apart and we still have smiles on our faces and we still know that we'll always be taken care of, the whole world is going to take notice and they're going to come to us for something."

Given Montgomery's readiness to share the hope inside of him even in a casual interview, it should come as no surprise that For Today's upcoming album, *Portraits* (hitting June 9), will benefit from solid preparation and deliver a well thought-out message. Like a seasoned pastor, he boils it down to three simple points:

"First, that God is passionate about every single person on this planet. That He looks down on us with so much love that He would willingly and without question or hesitation die for every single one of us. And then, secondly, that God is not inaccessible, but God is willing to walk and talk with every single one of us and to be patient with us and take whatever time is necessary for us to learn to hear Him and learn to walk as He would have us walk. I think, thirdly, that as we make the decision to follow God, that we're going to learn to walk in power and we're going to learn to act out of an authoritative compassion for the people around us. And then we can fully expect to change the world, when we're walking as Christ walked."

Talk about a concise vision!

As far as the sonics go on this new album, "It's all of my favorite things about the old album (*Ekklesia*), except better. We took the guitar work that the guys did on the last album and definitely topped it by far on this new album. It's heavier and I think it's a lot catchier as well – the vocal parts. There are parts that are a lot more metal than anything we did on the last album and there are parts that are a whole lot more hardcore than anything we did on the last album. I think it's going to really bring a whole new level to our live show, as well. It's pretty intense.

"We have a song called, 'Saul of Tarsus (The Messenger),' and it's about the apostle Paul. He was responsible for a third of the Bible and pretty much establishing the early church. It has a couple memorable parts – one being: 'I will never be silent,' and then another being: 'I am not ashamed.' That song really sticks out to me, because I know when I was in high school, I was calling myself a Christian, but I was never talking about it and I was never living it or walking in it. I pray that lyrically that song will be a powerful reminder to the kids that hear it and learn it to go change their high school and to never shut up; because If we really believe that God is offering eternal life, why would we ever keep it to ourselves?"

The band is doing its best to be agents of change, but some of the time all that entails is just getting out of God's way.

"We did a headlining tour through the midwest earlier this year and on that tour we were up in Minnesota for a few days and during those shows outside of anything I said or any of the other guys said during the show or any of the lyrics or anything, God was just there — so heavily that there were like these tough kids with tattoos and piercings and stuff just weeping, hunched over on the stage or on their face in the presence of God. It had nothing to do with us. It was just that us and all the kids that came out to the show just got together and we were like, 'Let's just soak in God's presence.' Some kids were touched to the point of dancing and singing and jumping; and some kids were touched to the point of just being broken and weeping. It was like, 'Yeah! This is what happens in God's throne room and we're bringing it here to random venues in the Midwest.' I saw a kid in Indiana with two broken toes healed on the spot; and a girl with a broken arm healed on the spot; a kid with a fractured ankle healed on the spot. We have slings and braces and all this random stuff laying around the house that we took from people, because they didn't need it anymore after they hung with God for awhile."

If documented on *MTV Cribs*, those medical equipment souvenirs could spark an interesting conversation.

"I grew up not really knowing if I believed in healing and stuff, and now, whether I believe in it or not, I've seen it. There's no arguing with that, you know?"

It's not all rejoicing and victory for this hard-hitting band, however. When asked about some of the hardest and most disheartening things seen on the road, Montgomery had some stories like that to share as well. "Probably the most disappointing thing I've ever seen being in a band: We toured with a band where one of the members accepted Jesus in my arms, sobbing; was like, 'I need Jesus in my life,' for the first time ever. He was in a really incredibly blasphemous outspoken-against-God band, so it was just awesome. We were so pumped up that God would do that; and then a couple months later he and I would be talking and he'd asked me if I thought he should quit the band and I would say, 'Honestly? Yeah, man; because bad company corrupts good character,' but he never did. He just didn't want to let his friends down or whatever. A couple months later we kind of stopped talking and I heard through the grapevine that he was still in the band and had begun questioning his faith and saying he wasn't sure if he believed and now he's back to just blatantly denying Christ and the existence of a god at all. Cursing the name of God publically every night; and it's such a bummer, because I know he's seen God and he's felt God and he's heard from God. He's not the only one. There's been kids at shows that've been radically touched by God and have not gotten plugged in or not had that fire lit up in them to pursue Him with everything they had, and they've just kind of fallen away. The next time we'll come through town or the next time we hear from them, it's just drugs or alcohol or... It's heartbreaking to see kids not understand how powerful they've been called to be."

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Coffee: cream and sugar, or black?
LOTS OF CREAM AND LOTS OF SUGAR. BUT I AM HOPING SOMEDAY WHEN I BECOME A MAN I CAN DRINK IT STRAIGHT BLACK.

Most awkward live moment?
ONE SHOW, MY PANTS RIPPED RIGHT AROUND THE CROTCH. OH, AND I GUESS I SHOULD MENTION THAT IN THOSE DAYS I DID NOT WEAR UNDERWEAR. BUT, EVER SINCE THAT SHOW … I DO.

If you could be any one of the X-MEN, which one would you be and why?
PROBABLY THAT BIG BLUE HAIRY GUY, BECAUSE HE WOULD MAKE FOR A GREAT FRONTMAN FOR THE CHARIOT.

BY LEVI MACALLISTER

"We had an idea for the photo shoot to be quasi - 'WAR' like. We did these shots where I am holding a Molotov cocktail and the photographer left it (a fake one made of only coffee and water) outside. Someone called it in to the police. Before we knew it we had the local police, FBI, Homeland Security, and plenty of news people at the studio asking questions and yelling and all that jazz. Once they found out that we were just some idiot kids taking pictures for fun, they eased up a good bit. The greatest part of all that to me is that we then had to email all of our pictures to those folks. So it makes me feel good inside knowing that Homeland Security of the USA has The Chariot press photos for this upcoming record. I promise that is a true story…"

The freakin' Chariot. What we should've done on this page is published a picture of Josh's smiling dimple-face, so that all you lucky readers open the mag and are taken aback with such vicious envy for his happiness that all 25,000 copies of the new personally-stamped, hand-numbered, signed, phone-number-laden, drawn-on albums sell out in five minutes.

Too bad we don't have the technology to put live news in paper magazines like you see in the Spielberg movies. I'd slap a live show down and you could watch the chaos personified. Show you backflips into the drum set. Show you head-runs and the fire-breathing Scoginator. "The show itself is the most exhilarating part of all. The camaraderie of hanging out with everyone as equals. We don't believe that we are up on some stage where people can come watch us play, we like to believe it is more about everyone of us sharing the adventure of a punk rock show. It's always real. We embrace it. It is honest."

When The Chariot's first album came out, I bought it, went to my friend's house, covered his TV with a thick blanket and destroyed his bedroom (which, if you've never destroyed your bedroom to violent music, you should really make that a priority). There is genius in unleashing something "risky, annoying, obnoxious" and whatever other words my mother uses to describe the "noise." It's true; Scogin and Co. subscribe to a niche audience, but I've watched the audience grow (come on… my four-year-old cousin rocks Yanni Depp like nobody's business…). With three albums dug into the dirt to build up the coalition, the rumors are in favor of the war.

"We never write music to meet any expectations but our own. It's better that way, so that 10 years from now when no one remembers who The Chariot is, we can still listen to our songs and be stoked that we wrote them. Records are like children. We give birth to them and then we get the pleasure of watching them grow. As we grow as musicians we are better 'parents' to the music we create. We're able to see the albums grow into something much more mature. This record was crazy different than the other records I have done. It felt more like writing a book than lyrics for songs. The title deals more with personal struggles and the 'WARS' that go on inside your head. They deal with my father passing away year before last, struggles of right and wrong, faith, grace and mercy as well as anything else that goes along with life."

Anyone that knows Scogin's lyrics knows that the man wears his heart on his sleeve. I've heard his art been described as: "worship … but to good music." I'd say that's an appropriate description. After all, we're called to lives of worship – not half hours of it – and if there "is no such thing as a day in the life of Josh Scogin apart from The Chariot," then what a better compliment for a man who's held tight to his first love? "Basically, in 7th grade I sold my soul to the devil for rock and roll; and in 11th grade Jesus stole it back. I've seen God do things that I just can't deny. Literal healing of cancer, as well as visions that I've seen come to pass. I am very careful to never condemn anyone who has different beliefs than I do, because they could be just as passionate for what they believe as I am mine. But as for me, I am forced, by my own experiences, to stay on the narrow path, as it were. I don't serve God just because I feel like it is a fun thing to do. I believe He is true and very real. It doesn't matter to me what goes on around me; I am just going to remain who I am. I believe people want the truth, I believe they are ever searching, but I also believe that people have struggles. It is very unfortunate that we, as Christians, are the only army that shoots the wounded. When someone is struggling, we're very quick to discard them and continue on our way. I don't think it should be that way. Therefore, I just try to maintain my path that comes from ever learning and ever seeking the truth – and befriend whenever able."

The modest composure is a breath of fresh air, and the message is beautiful for the scene The Chariot is reaching.

I can't speak for the "hardcore country," but I know that my own regional discourse is riddled with bands rivaling against one another in the scene. A gang war, complete with threats and violence... "I feel like the days of helping each band out and wanting to support your own underground scene are gone. It used to feel like everyone who was a part of the underground scene joined forces together and wanted to help each other out, as if we all joined up and said, 'We don't need mainstream America to approve, we can support each other and it will succeed.' Nowadays it's far more in the vein of a dog-eat-dog world. But, even as I am typing this, I am reminded of bands that still exist that are completely legit. They'd befriend another band to help them out, or give them advice, or hook them up with a show. Hopefully, that can be more of the mentality of the future.

"I am still just that kid who was a sophomore in high school, who just wanted to play some punk rock shows."

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It's Alright in the End

BY ANDREW SCHWAB

THERE ARE VERY FEW BANDS WHO CAN PULL OFF BEING SIMULTANEOUSLY INCENDIARY AND FRAGILE, COMMUNICATING ANGST AND HEARTFELT VULNERABILITY. YET, THIS BAND HAS SOMEHOW BUILT THEIR REPUTATION AROUND IT; SINCE THEIR EARLY DAYS, MEWITHOUTYOU HAS WALKED THAT VERY TIGHTROPE. BUT WITH THE RELEASE OF THEIR NEW RECORD, *IT'S ALL CRAZY, IT'S ALL FALSE, IT'S ALL A DREAM, IT'S ALRIGHT*, THE

BAND HAS DECIDEDLY GRAVITATED TOWARD THE DISARMING SIDE OF THEIR COLLECTIVE PERSONALITY. THE POST-PUNK FEROCITY OF THEIR ADOLESCENCE AS A UNIT HAS TAKEN A BACKSEAT TO THE HEARTFELT SUBTLETIES THAT BEGAN WITH THEIR PREVIOUS RELEASE, *BROTHER, SISTER*. DEEPLY POETIC AND CHALLENGING, WITH METAPHORS GALORE, THIS A RECORD THAT WILL CHALLENGE THE MOST QUESTIONING EARS.

Photo: Josh Bender

But don't let the softer side of mewithoutYou fool you, they are as calculated as ever with their presentation of emotion this time around; forcing the listener to confront many a vital idea. Never ones to mince words, this record is as aggressively fresh and distinct as they come. Guitarist Mike Weiss had plenty of insight to share about the new record and the latest incarnation of the band itself when I spoke with him recently:

Mike, thanks for taking some time to let people know what is going on with you and the band. As I understand, this album continues the evolution of your sound, along with Aaron's vocal style. It's sure to provoke much conversation. Talk to me about the process of recording the new record ... how did you push yourselves sonically, instrumentally, and thematically this time around? Who produced, mixed and engineered?
A major way that the band was pushed this time around was the absence of Chris Kleinberg. Not having his guitar sounds, his stern standards on quality control and the softer influence he brought to the band's sound in the past created a challenge. It was one that we were up for though. As a direct result there is only my electric guitar ideas along with Aaron playing most of the acoustic stuff. I think this de-emphasized the past sounds of big guitar rock on our earlier records. It made the electric guitar more noticeable, because there is less of it! Make sense? Pushing forward in a thematic way could be how Aaron approached his songwriting. There are a lot more tunes as opposed to screaming. Lyrics are more story telling oriented with an emphasis on the tradition of fables. We did a lot of Aaron's acoustic stuff as full band on this album and that format really carved a new sound out for us.

The album title leaves room for much interpretation, as has been true with your previous releases, as well. Great album titles, in my opinion, always evoke discussion. What is the significance of the album title this time around?
I believe the title, *It's All Crazy, It's All False, It's All A Dream, It's Alright,* is only as significant as people would allow it to be. The truth behind this wisdom is a secret that is told through the experience of your life. There came a time for me when I started to see this world as something more than just my perception of it. Our understanding of how events will unfold, how people will behave, what you yourself will want and not want at any given time. It's completely chaotic and temporary. The last part of the title about things being "Alright" is the most important bit. There is a comfort that exists and it never changes on you. There is a truth I believe and it's always there for discovery. We don't own it, but it's okay.

As a band, you have always had extremely poetic lyrics, which have always focused a bit more on imagery and subtle expression of emotions, rather than just spelling things out and spoonfeeding the audience. How does that come into play with the lyrical focus of the new record?
Like I mentioned earlier, the lyrical focus of this record is very much emphasized by story telling. Aaron draws from both personal experiences and found folklore from various religious/spiritual texts. Songs like, "The Fox, the Crow and the Cookie" teach about lessons in humility. "The Beetle King" is taken from a story about attempts to describe God in a way that cannot be done with words alone... We didn't ask what it seems like, we asked what it is. Other songs, like "Cattail Down," mix the two together. Our vocalist Aaron is recounting experiences that he's had as a drifter – traveling on trains and hitchhiking; as well as incorporating the teachings of Bawa Muhaiyaddeen and Christianity by referring to the losing of one's self: "You don't know where you came from, you don't know where you're going / You think you're you, but you don't know who you are / You're not you, you're everyone else."

"There is a comfort that exists and it never changes on you. There is a truth I believe and it's always there, for discovery. We don't own it, but it's okay.

Your touring resume' has grown and grown over the last several years, as the industry has continued to embrace the band's unique niche. You have had the opportunity to play with some very influential artists. What bands did you enjoy sharing the stage with the most and why?
A few of my favorite bands to have played with over the years have been: The Snake The Cross The Crown, Maps and Atlases, Blood Brothers, Brand New, Blonde Redhead, Make Believe. The reason I really liked touring or playing shows with these bands is because they all inspired me to step up my own game as a musician/performer.

Though line-up changes with your outfit pale in comparison to some other bands, you have experienced some significant changes in your lineup along the way, which has obviously shaped your sound. How have these augmentations affected the chemistry within the band, and how do you feel about the current lineup?
If I could orchestrate a lineup to play with, it would be all the dudes that are in the band right now and Chris Kleinberg. It's hard enough to get everyone to do a tour, so I'd take that over anything else. I like playing with my band guys.

This may sound like a typical question, but give me an atypical answer: You have made a name for yourselves as being unique in both performance and sound... What or who has inspired you along the way to become the band that you are?
Our influences have been musical and non-musical. For Aaron, I think he takes a lot from the Bible, Rumi, Bawa, Morrissey and Leonard Cohen. Rickie gets into stuff like Magnetic Fields, Nirvana, Fugazi, Smashing Pumpkins, Hum. My influences are mainly Brit Pop stuff from the 90's, Fugazi, Dr. Dog or Gogol Bordello. Greg likes a lot of indie music like Built to Spill, Jimmy Eat World, as well as mainstream stuff, like U2 and REM. Ultimately, we all like all that stuff. Non-musical influences have been an overwhelming sense that there's something more to life than what we've been chasing over the years. A search for a peace within each of our hearts that we are all connected by. Aaron has always liked rabbits and I am influenced by the Phillies winning the 2008 World Series.

Describe the current incarnation of your live show... Chaotic? Orchestral? Theatrical? I think many are curious as to what to expect next, how the new music will dictate your show, which has become known as being one of the most interesting around.
The live show is pretty much the same as it's ever been for us. We will have more additional

instrumentation that we used on the studio recordings of the new record, so we may have more guest musicians live if we can hook it up. I'm not so sure why our live show has been described as theatrical. Maybe because Aaron dances around like he does, but it's not like we are in costume or anything ... hmmmm... I don't know. Anyway, we just get up there and try to sound good every night if we can.

There has been a specific literary quality to much of your material, whether that is in lyrics, song titles, or album titles. Do you consider yourselves artists' artists? What literary works have come to shape what you do in recent history?
We aren't necessarily artists' artists. But maybe that's just me kidding myself, thinking we could appeal to a wider range of listeners than we really do. Isn't everyone in a band these days anyway? As for a literary quality to our music, I'd say that's a question for Aaron. He seems to pay careful attention to meter and rhythm when he writes lyrics, which is a literary element along with his ability to tell a good story. I know that he does read a lot, but most of what I see in him is a sweet guy that wants to write something honest and meaningful. Plus, he's a bit of a goof.

Do you still tour in the Veggie bus? If so, how has it held together? Describe the added benefits and/or liabilities of touring this way...
The tour bus is fine. It runs on some different fuels, like most diesel engines can. Sometimes it breaks down, sometimes it don't.

Because of your affiliation with the "Christian" music industry via the festivals, bands, and your record label, there is an obvious limitation that is placed on your music. How have you embraced (battled) this along the way ... and what opinions do you have on the role of spiritual stereotypes in how people perceive your art? Do you ever find that the way people define you (judge you) personally from your music affects your personal spiritual life?
I actually haven't found that any of this judgement has affected my own personal spiritual life. You just have to embrace it with anything else people want to write about you. Ultimately, it will make your head spin 'round too much to battle anyone. Maybe it was P.T. Barnam who said it best: "Write what you want, just spell our name right." I don't really have much of an opinion about spiritual stereotypes that are different than any other kinds of stereotypes. I guess they limit people's ability to see a deeper layer to something. Other times, stereotypes make you project your own misguidedness onto others. It's just as silly or dangerous to like a band because of what spiritual beliefs you think certain members have as it is to dismiss a band because of what spiritual beliefs you think certain members have.

You all would be considered veterans at this point. You have successfully navigated the tedious waters of this thing to remain a full-time outfit through several records and many years. Given the current economy, do you have any advice for up-and-coming artists (besides give up and become an accountant)?
My advice to any bands or artists that are coming up is to never expect a single thing from any of this. Do your part and make the music that you need to make. See what comes of it and be grateful. Don't try to force it.

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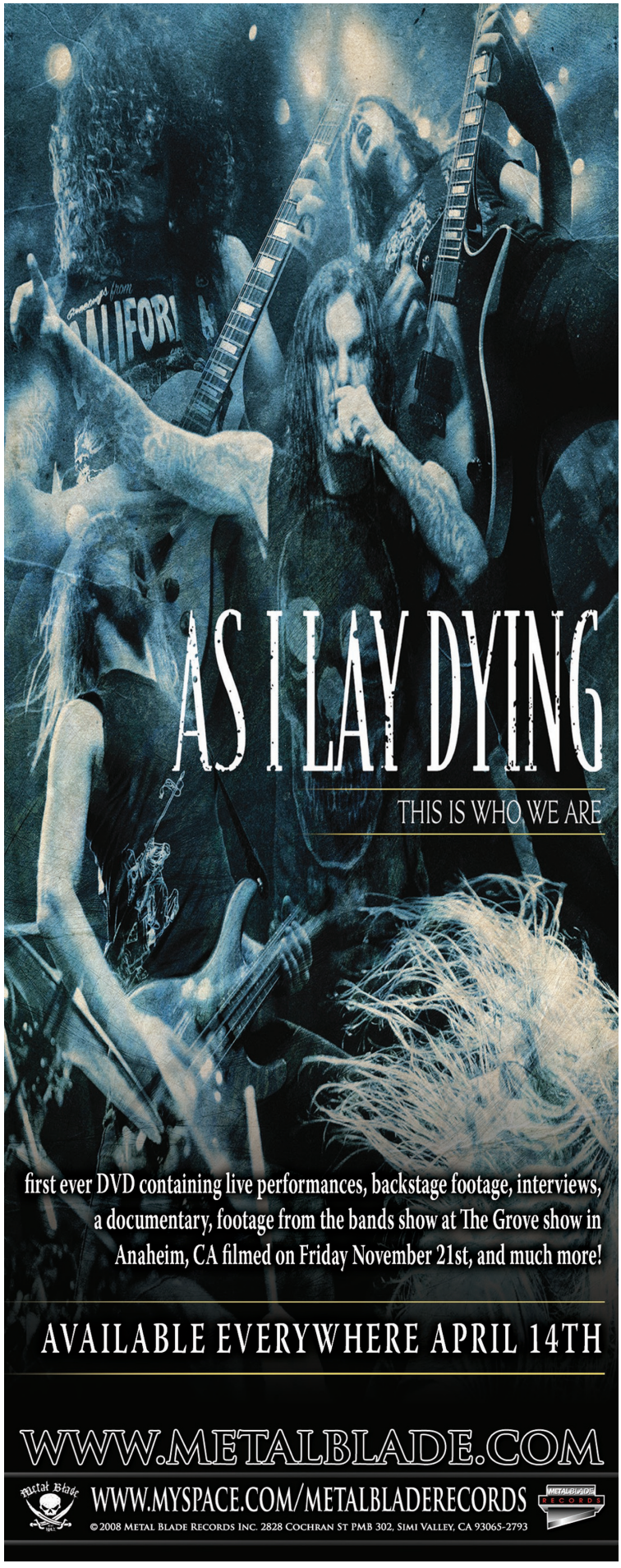
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MXPX ARE HUGE IN JAPAN

"OUR FANBASE IN JAPAN IS AMAZING," GUSHES DRUMMER YURI RULEY. "THEY SEEM TO EMBRACE THE KIND OF AMERICAN POP CULTURE THING MORE SO THAN SOME OTHER PLACES."

BY DOUG VAN PELT

During the times that MxPx has toured Japan, they've noticed that their fans have an uncanny ability to know when their plane is arriving, where they'll be when they come out of Customs, what hotel they're arriving at and when, their train schedule and hotel in the next town, and so on...

"You have your most Beatlesque or Cheap Trick moments, where everywhere you go, there's fans waiting for you. 'How do they find out we're going to be here at this point?' Either there's a total underground information source, like someone from the promoter leaks the information or something; or it's just so common that the schedule that American bands keep that they just know (predictable). When you're at the airport, then you go to your hotel; and there's people waiting at the hotel. There's some people that came in another van from the airport to meet you again at the hotel, to take a few more pictures. At the train station in the next town and at the hotel in the next town. It's so funny! It's cool. They're great. Obviously, there's not a word spoken, really, many times. But they're so grateful that you're there. It feels good. And the shows are great, too. There's a festival over there called Summersonic and it's kind of the answer to Fuji Rock, which is huge. We played for, like, 15,000 people. It was going crazy. I think there's a video on youtube, where you can watch us playing 'The Broken Bones' and it's filmed with big, swinging cameras and the whole bit."
[see it at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=agj6sTNAnmI]

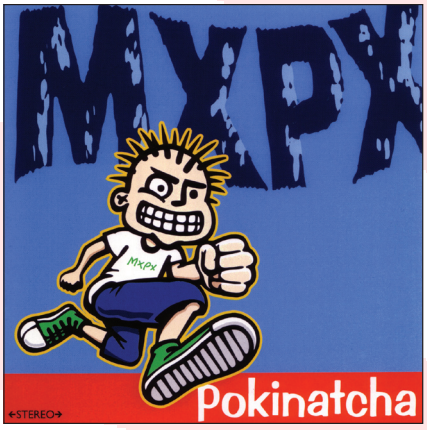
The lads from Bremerton have taken the idea of covers one step further (even beyond the individual spoof photos the band shot to depict the iconic image of each of the artists they were paying tribute to). They not only cover a song by legendary Japanese punk band, The Blue Hearts ("Linda, Linda"), Mike Herrera sings the tune in their language.

"They're a special people and great fans," explains Ruley, "so we did that for them. Mike spent two days doing the vocals for that. I think he might have even had to re-track some, because it wasn't pronounced properly," he laughs. "It was fun to have a song in Japanese. He'll sound as strange as Japanese people singing in English do."

The band's been throwing covers in their set from the beginning and, ever since they successfully stumbled onto the magic of the original *On The Cover*, it was always tentatively planned to return to the concept. This time they created a thematic time stamp of re-interpreting songs from the 80s. It's the perfect album for MxPx in 2009, as they'll likely spend more time recording and releasing music than the usual non-stop touring.

Herrera has a side band called Tumbledown, MxPx is hitting Europe, China, and Japan this spring, and there'll be a DVD coming out (*Triple Threat*), featuring three shows filmed last year. Part of the reason the band is changing its M.O. is that they're feeling the impact of today's economy just like everyone else. "Everything is changing. We're just trying to feel it out and see what's gonna work for us."

For the past 16 years, pretty much everything has worked out for MxPx. The band has released 13+ albums and gained critical acclaim, and with each new release memories were made. Ruley took the time to go through the MxPx catalog and comment briefly on the memories of each.



Pokinatcha

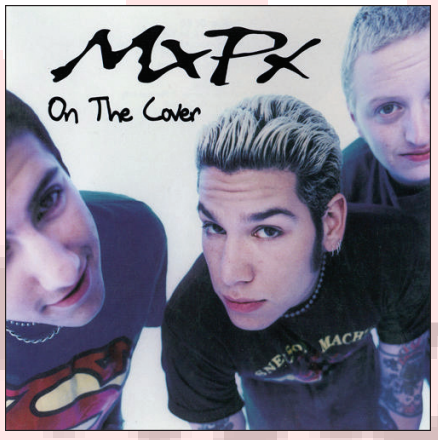
"That was a pretty exciting time. You know, just signing to Tooth & Nail. We had done the demo with Aaron Sprinkle, which was like four songs and I remember telling Aaron at that time, 'Oh man! I hope I get to do this again sometime!' And he was like, 'I think you probably will.' He was just a kid, too, at that time. The memories I have of it are more of hanging out – like the recording sessions. It was just so new to us. I remember Mike feeling real uncomfortable doing vocals without his bass on. So, he tracked the vocals – at least for a few songs – with his bass on, just hanging around him, so he could get all into it and stuff. 'It just sounds weird. That's not like I sing on stage, so I need to kind of get that vibe going.'

"I remember Aaron Sprinkle was gone at times. He'd be, 'Alright, I'm gonna cruise for a few hours,' because he was so busy. I think he was a newlywed. I think his wife was pregnant or something. He was just gone quite a bit. I remember us being kind of bummed out about that. It was a fun time. That was the only album we ever made with Andy. It's kind of weird to think, 'Oh, that's true! That was with Andy.' It wasn't exactly how we wanted it to turn out at the time. I remember *Dookie* had just come out and we were thinking, 'That's what we want it to sound like!' Because at that time that album sounded just amazing. So, we went in and, I think even Aaron said, 'Bring in some albums that, you know, as kind of a guideline for me, that you want to sound like.' Well, it didn't sound anything like it. I think it's good in a way, looking back on it, because it has its own kind of crappy character to it – kind of a charm." He laughs. "It's so bad. The musicianship is all over the map. I remember at that time, we were all just, 'Play as fast as you can and as crazy as you can and that's the goal.' I look back on it and I think, 'It's the beginning, so…' I'm not necessarily ashamed of anything about that record, but it's kind of like… I don't ever listen to it. From time to time I'll put on a song or two and go, 'Geez! What a mess!'

Teenage Politics

We timed that record, because it was over Spring Break of our senior year. We did *Pokinatcha* in the summer. *Pokinatcha* came out right before Christmas break in high school. A lot of people ask us… They thought that, 'Oh, it must be so cool that you guys were a band. You had a CD out.' I don't remember that many people knowing or thinking that it was… There was a few people, like, 'You guys have a CD out? Oh man! That's crazy! That's cool!' I guess now it's so different. I don't know if it's like that big of a deal anymore for bands to have a CD. Everybody has a CD of something. At the time, as unusual as it was, as I recall, basically we were one of maybe only a few bands in our high school. It wasn't as big of a shocker as some people think it might have been.

With *Teenage Politics*... We were just banging it out then. We wrote *Pokinatcha* hadn't been out six months and we were like, 'Alright, let's do this.' Not even – only like four months or something. So, we started recording *Teenage Politics* during our Spring Break. *Teenage Politics* was the modicum of efficiency for us, because we had Bob Moon. We had a new producer come up – a guy named Bob Moon. He was from California, you know. He was a little more kind of chilled out. He was fun. A real fun guy to just make jokes with. I'd eat his food behind his back. And he'd be hungry and go get his food and it'd be gone, because I ate it. That kind of stuff. I remember *Teenage Politics* being a lot of fun. It was only 9 days. We went over to Seattle and recorded it at the same place – Avast! The guy that owns it was a friend of Soundgarden. I remember Soundgarden coming in a few times while we were recording to talk to the guy that owned the place. We did all the music in three days. We did all the vocals in three days; and we mixed it in three days. We were pretty happy with the way it came out. Bob was good. We just banged it out. We didn't mess around at all. We were all, 'Oh! This is so much better than *Pokinatcha* – so much cleaner and tighter.' That was just quick – that one coming out."



On The Cover

"After our first tour we came back and did *On The Cover*. We did that again with Bob at Avast. That was fun. It was the first time we did a covers record. It was pretty quick. Back then we didn't spend a lot of time pouring over the songs as arrangements or every little detail. We just kind of, 'Yep! That's cool! Let's do it!' Because we used to practice all the time, so really we would just work up these songs, so by the time we went into the studio, they were all pretty much done and ready to go, so it was just a matter of banging 'em out."

Life In General

"Kind of a funny one, because Bob Moon again came up and we had a god-awful amount of songs – I want to say we had, like, 32 songs. Well, *Let It Happen*, the re-release *Let It Happen* came out in '98 – that was basically the first try at *Life In General*. I don't know if this is old news, but we recorded *Life In General* and basically went down to Tooth & Nail and sat in the office with Brandon, listened to a few tracks and he was like, 'Ah…' He was really not too happy with the production of it, because we rushed. I think I did 32 songs in two days on drums. So, it was just, 'Go, go, go, go, go!'

I mean, we were in the studio for like a month. It was just like, 'Hurry, hurry, hurry!' It didn't sound very good. It was very much *Teenage Politics* from a production standpoint and a playing standpoint. After we kind of finished that record… Ghoti Hook had just gotten signed, I think, and they were going to put their first record out and their record sounded like a million times better than our stuff, production-wise. So, he was like, 'What do you guys think about doing this again?'" Yuri laughs. "We were kind of a little bit, 'Geez! I guess you're right. It doesn't sound very good.' He played us the Ghoti Hook stuff and it was just (makes quick blowing sound), 'Forget about it!' It was so much better. We were like, 'Okay.' He said, 'We've got this guy named Steve Krovac, who actually did the Cooties record before he worked with us. So, I remember Steve Krovac came up. I think he was kind of a new find for Brandon. Tom played drums for them. I remember Tom telling me, 'This guy is going to kick your (bleep)! You better start playing with bigger sticks now! Play all the time. Start training, because this is going to be brutal.'

"He was right. We drove down to LA to record *Life In General* with Steve Kravac. One memorable thing from that trip was we had some friends of ours – high school friends – who were going to go down to Disneyland. They were like, 'Do you mind if we caravan with you?' We were like, 'Sure, fine!' Well, they got in a car accident right in front of us. One of the girls was not too good at driving, I guess, and she changed lanes way too quick and the car started careening out of control and started flipping in the middle of the road and flipped off. It was like the kind of car accident where people die. It ended up upside-down, 25 feet off the road. 'Oh my god!' We were totally freaking out. We pulled over and made sure everyone was okay. A few people had their necks hurt, but everyone was fine. We stayed to make sure they were sussed out. That was it. They didn't continue on. They just went home, battered. Then we kept on going down to LA. We showed up to LA and it was kind of new to us, still – the whole Hollywood thing.

"We went down there and hooked up with Steve Kravac and recorded *Life In General*. It was tough. For me, that was the changing point for me as a musician. Because he just beat me. It was drums all day long, all day long. Before it was like, as soon as I got it 'good enough,' I was done. It was like, 'No, it has to be great!' All the minute details and stuff like that had to be good. It's kind of… I was into the final product, of course. When I first heard *Life In General* after it was all done, because after I played the drums and stuff I came home. I hadn't heard anything of it until it was done. It was like, 'Who is this band? Is this us?' I was pretty impressed by it. Steve was great. I credit him for the drummer I am today, for sure. Hands down – or at least playing a major part in that. So, for me, *Life in General* – it was our first great record, I think. It was the first time we were like, 'This is actually really good!' We were so proud of it. The band started taking off at that point, too. We were doing a lot of television and the shows were getting bigger. It was just a great time for the band. Playing with a lot of new bands that we kind of grew up being fans of – you know, getting on the *Warped Tour*. It just kind of opened up our world. Definitely one of our best records. The recording of it was a huge turning point for me – and us as a band, because we just learned so much from Steve. We also had him do *Slowly Going The Way Of The Buffalo*."

Slowly Going the Way of the Buffalo

"That was our first major label, since we had… After *Life In General* and kind of during that thing we had the big thing with Tooth & Nail. We hired Steve to do *Slowly Going The Way Of The Buffalo*. I think because it was his first major label producing gig, it kind of like … I think it went to his head. Not in an egotistical way, but it freaked him out, I think. And so we spent… He tore every song apart. For drums, he was like, AC/DC – *Back In Black*. That was the first CD he put on when we went into the studio. It was like, 'Listen to these drums. This is amazing. Listen to how simple they are. There's almost no fills. Every fill is just perfect.' So, basically, the drums were designed around *Back in Black* – the sense of how simplified they were. He did that to everything – guitars… Everything was, like, perfect. If there was one note – you know, one little high-hat hit that was a little louder than the rest, 'Cut!' I spent two weeks, I think, on 18 songs. It was crazy. On a good day I'd get two songs done in one day. It was literally 12 hours of playing the same song. So, it beat me down a lot. Everyone was kind of like, 'Ehhh.' Not super stoked.

"After I was done, Steve spent five days editing the drums. This was prior to software, so he literally took the tape off the reel and measured between the kicks and cut out… He had all the cuts that he took out taped up on the wall and there were some that were like tiny, tiny, tiny – like an eighth of an inch. When that reel is going by, and eighth of an inch is not noticeable to the human ear at all, so we were just like, 'Steve, are you okay?' And he went into this, like, crazy… He was so burned out by that point. It just killed him. So, for the rest of the record … I mean, he did fine and all that, but the mixing was kind of problematic. We went down to LA to mix it in a big, new studio. I think he was kind of at the edge of his ability, maybe. He was great. He was really good at getting bands to play well together and to kind of break it down into the simplest components of stuff. I think, because it was a major label, it was his major label debut as a producer and all this … I think it kind of freaked him out. So, we kind of decided that it was Steve's last go with us. And, it definitely put a strain on our relationship. We would get close with all the people that we were working with. We become friends with 'em. Typically, they're a few years older than us and they're more like peers. He was expecting and kind of planning his financial year around us – when we were going to do *The Ever Passing Moment* and we said, 'Well, *Slowly Going The Way Of The Buffalo* was kinda not… That whole experience wasn't … we don't want to do that again.' And so, it was years before we spoke again. It's just sad when that kind of stuff gets in the way, but, it does."

Let It Happen

After *Slowly Going The Way of the Buffalo*, *Let It Happen* – Tooth & Nail put that out kind of without us even knowing about it. And it kind of killed the momentum of *Slowly Going The Way Of The Buffalo*," he laughs. "But, it did well. It's definitely one of people's favorite records of ours. It sold well. Our set is still heavily based around *Life In General* and *Slowly Going The Way of the Buffalo*, so, you know, it's a testament to its popularity."

At The Show

"That one we got to work with Stephen Egerton and Bill Stevenson on. For me, it was amazing, because Bill Stevenson is my favorite drummer of all time. We had met them on a *Warped Tour*, but I was actually star struck when I met Bill for the first time. From The Descendents and all that. Then he came out and we filmed over two nights, but he was out for, like, three days or something. We kind of hung around the next day to make sure he got everything. We were on the bus. It was so fun to hang out with Bill. He's such and unusual guy. He's built like a tank. He farts and burps. There's no socially polite, necessarily… He's just a different guy. I've never met anyone like Bill. But, love him to death, of course. He came out and tuned my drums up and made sure everything was fine. With a live album, you just let it fly, really, and hope for the best. And Stephen did all the mixing and stuff. It's fun to kind of get to be friends with your heroes and stuff. The live album did great for us, too. It was kind of an intro to who we were, because it was kind of coming up at the time of *Life In General* and *Slowly Going The Way Of The Buffalo*. Putting out a live album was like, 'Oh yeah, that's my favorite record. It's so much better than the record.' It was a good time."

The Ever Passing Moment

"We did *The Ever Passing Moment* with Jerry Finn, who was kind of an up-and-comer at the time. He had done *Enema of the State* and stuff that we were into of his was Superdrag, *Head Trip In Every Key*. Production-wise, it's great. It's a very good band, too, but production-wise, we listened to that record a lot. And also Jawbreaker *Dear You*. With the major label backing, we had a little bit more money to throw at some people that we liked and appreciated as producers and stuff. We asked Jerry to do it and he obliged. He had just done *Enema of the State*, so we sort of heard his punk rock production. He came up to Seattle. We did the drums in Seattle. He was so much more laid-back, it freaked me out. Because the last two records were with Steve and I was just… Just thinking about recording the drums made me sweat and get all shaky and stuff. I was like, 'Oh, God! It has to be perfect!' And he was like, 'Dude! Just chill out!' I was always like, 'Jerry, are you sure? Are you sure this is right? I hear a little high-hat thing here.' He was always like, 'It sounds fine to me.' It took a little getting used to, but he was great. He was super good at what he did. He got great tones and he was just so laid-back, but a lot of fun.

"We went down to LA and recorded all the guitars and everything else down there. The studio called Conway, which was kind of fancy. The Foo Fighters were there as well, as well as Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young – all in the same studio complex (sort of thing). It was like a triple room place. There was like a common area, where there was a kitchen and all the bands kinda had their own little dressing room, but they basically all hung out in the same place. So, we got to know the Foo Fighters real well then and hung out with them a ton – every day for, like, a month. It was cool. For us, it was like, 'Dave Grohl is kind of an amazing drummer.' Taylor's great, too. He's no slouch, for sure. Some of my favorite memories of that period happened during the recording of that record. Getting to know Dave Grohl. He was just a real nice guy. We were like, 'Hey, man, how does that room sound?' We had the big room and we had a drumset set up, and so we kind of thought we'd trick him into going and playing for us. He was like, 'That snare looks great! What is that?' And we'd be like, 'Oh, come and check it out!' Being super like a kid, getting all excited about stuff. He kinda sat down and just started playing some simple stuff. Tom, Mike and I… Once people saw Dave Grohl walking into the studio, everybody followed him," Yuri laughs. "It was just fun. He's a great story teller. Taylor Hawkins and I spent some time together talking about drums – just cool stuff. We asked Dave to do that '1-2-3-4' on 'The Next Big Thing.' He did kind of a cool guest vocal for us. It was just a fun time. We were in Hollywood. We lived in Hollywood for, like, six weeks and hung out with Foo Fighters every day. It could've been worse. We were happy with that. It was a little different for us, because Jerry was really laid-back. I remember one day he shows up at, like, 5 pm." (laughs) I was like, 'What?! What is this?' He was just so kind of just chilled out. It was good. We love Jerry."

The Rennaissance EP

"Then we did *The Renaissance EP* after that. We did the *Warped Tour 2000*. Fat Mike came on our bus and said, 'Hey, I really like this record. I didn't like your other records, but I like this one.' He's really straight-forward. 'I like it. You guys are good. This is the first time I really liked you guys.' That kind of started the conversation about doing something on that record. We decided we wanted to do something that was kind of … I don't know. Just different stuff that wasn't super poppy. We recorded that in our… We built a studio before we recorded *The Ever Passing Moment*, but we really didn't do much in it until we recorded *The Renaissance EP*. That was like the first thing we did in there. We recorded it ourselves. Not too much to remember from that, just up here in Bremerton. We were just working on our own schedule. But we learned a lot about working in the studio and stuff like that."

Before Everything & After

A couple years later. We had done a lot of touring, getting married, all that kind of stuff. We went into the studio with Dave Jerden. We met with a bunch of different producers for that. We met a lot of people that had done. What's the guy that did the P.O.D. stuff, who's pretty big? Howard Benson. He was funny, because he was dressed in matching sweats – a grey sweatshirt without a hood. Just kind of schleppy, but he drove in in a white Mercedes Benz. He was very New York, you know, like, 'Hey, I'm gonna make you guys pop stars!' We met with a bunch of people and finally decided to settle on Dave Jerden, who worked with The Rolling Stones, Talking Heads, and big things like Jane's Addiction, Alice in Chains, some rock stuff – big rock stuff. And, of course, The Offspring. That was kind of why we ended up choosing him, because we were like, 'Out of all these guys, like, if we want to make a slick rock record, that's who's going to make it.' And so we met with Dave and he's such a super cool dude. It was like working with the Rolling Stones.

He actually was a Rolling Stone. The Rolling Stones made him an official Rolling Stone," Yuri laughs at the memory, "because he had done a lot of work with Mick Jagger and so Mick Jagger basically told the band, 'Look, this is my guy. He's going to record this record.' I think *Dirty Work* was the record – not one of the more memorable ones. Keith Richards came in… I guess they were having a band meeting and Dave was in the control room and kind of uncomfortably sitting there while they were discussing his fate and Keith Richards came in and pulled a knife on him. He had this whale bone knife and Dave stepped into him and pulled his own knife out on Keith and was like, 'If you wanna mess with me, you're going to get the end of this,' ya know? And Keith put his knife away and gave him this big hug. And he said that was it. Keith and him were like best friends from that point on. So, this guy had a lot of stories. Also, a pretty rough life. He was a heroin addict for many, many years. When he worked with us, he wasn't, but he was still feeling the effects of Methadone and all that kind of stuff. He was in his kind of like Buddhist, don't-work-too-much phase," Yuri laughs.

"We had a lot of money to record it and we lived in LA. Each of us had our own apartment. It was kind of ridiculous. We'd show up at, like, 12 or 12:30 in the afternoon he'd roll in at one and we'd work until 8 o'clock at night, maybe 9 at the latest. So, we were like, 'Oh my gosh! This sucks! We should've finished this record forever ago.' We spent almost a month in pre-production, which I enjoyed. That was an enjoyable part, because it was just interesting to be… It was just the three of us and him in a room in the studio. He had an acoustic guitar and a keyboard and he'd kind of sit there as we played the song and take notes. We'd fiddle around. That was the most that we kind of de-constructed stuff. We were trying to make this slick pop record.

We started recording and Ron Fair, who was president of the A&M part of Interscope. You could see him at the Grammy's some of the time. He did Christina Aguilara. He was a pop guy. He would come in and listen to the songs and he'd be like, 'Alright.' He'd go sit down at his piano and change a major into a 7th and go, 'Alright, that's what you've guys have gotta do.' So, we'd go in and retrack the song and all the majors would turn into a 7th's and change the melody a little bit and, 'There you go.' It was kind of a joke. There was one time we were trying to get Ron Sfair over to the studio to listen to stuff, and he never called us back. It was a week later. We finally got ahold of him and, 'What's going on?' And he's like, 'Oh, man. I'm sorry! I got stuck behind a refrigerator,'" Yuri laughs out loud. "He was moving a refrigerator out of his basement and had to go up a stairway and the stairway up this old house got thinner as he went up and the refrigerator got stuck and there wasn't a door to go out. It was so retarded, but a good story.

"That (album) was just painful. That was a painful one, because we started recording in September of '02 and the record came out in September of '03. We were hoping it would come out in the beginning of '03 or spring or summer – sometime earlier than the middle of fall. So, it was kind of painful. It happens with every record that you do. Once you're done with it, it's kind of like, 'Ah, I wish we would have done this differently.' Ya know? It was our biggest production ever. We spent so much money and it was just kind of, like, crazy.

"We did the Diet Pepsi commercial in that time frame. It was another kind of hope-filled time. 'Maybe this would be the time the band would really take off?' It was a good time, but we always hated to waste things like money – even if it's not ours – and that was one of those times, where it was just the money. We had Chris and Tom Lord Alge mix – each take half the record. They're, like, thirty-five hundred dollars a song and, you know… So, it was bad. On the money side of things."

Panic

"After that whole fiasco, we decided it was time to leave A&M and Interscope. 'We've gotta get out of here. This is not our scene.' I think it was mutual. I think they were kind of done with us, too, since we hadn't become the next Blink 182. So, we left them and a friend of ours who we had toured with in the past, named Joe Sib, had Side One Dummy, and it was doing pretty good. He said, 'Before you talk to anybody, talk to me.' We did and we struck a deal with him that was good. Obviously way less money, but we went back to the … not old school, necessarily, but we had our own studio. We thought, 'We're going to record it in our studio. It's free.' That's kind of a no-brainer, there.

"We found this guy named Gavin MacKillop, who had done all the Toad the Wet Sprocket stuff… He did Sugarcult. We just liked him. He's a Scottish guy. He said, 'Sure, I'll come up.' He wasn't busy, so he was willing to do it for next to nothing. He came up to Bremerton. We recorded it in our studio. As for me, that was like another turning point, personally, as a drummer. He really got me to enjoy the recording. No pressure, just have fun and relax, you know? I was, again, on that stress train that everything had to be perfect. It just made everything sound bad. I said, 'Alright, I'll give your way a try.' It sounds good. I'm as happy with that record, from my point of view, since *Life In General*. Gavin was great. We worked… We did that record in, like, two weeks, too. We had everything done. We had done extensive demo-ing and stuff like that. We even used some of the drums from the demos on that record – just a few songs. It was super chill. It was just a good time. We worked 14-hour days. We were also pulling back. You react to your last record by doing things a little differently, you know? The last record, *Before*

Everything & After, was kind of our shot at a big-sounding production, kind of a slick rock thing. The next one we put was kind of more, 'Okay, we're gonna pull back and we're not going to put anything on there that's unnecessary,' so it went quicker there in that sense. We weren't putting keyboards under every note to fill it out a little bit. It went quicker. Mixing went quick. We mixed it in LA at his place. It was just good. Making records can be fun and stuff. They can be stressful, but this one was good. Just pretty laid-back. That one did well for us. We did a lot of touring. It was good timing, and to go back to an indie label was good. We were real happy with that."

Secret Weapon

"We did the re-release of *Let It Happen*, that was kind of our introduction back into Tooth & Nail. Which was a pretty neat thing. So, we started working with them again on the re-release of *Let It Happen*. I know we're missing *Ten Years And Running*, but that was just a compilation, so there's nothing to talk about. So, we started talking to Tooth & Nail again and it was good. Subsequently, we had a new manager and all that kind of thing. At this point, Creighton (Burke) is out of the picture after *Panic*.

"We parted with Creighton after that. He got really, really sick. He had an ulcer or something like that. He was basically not managing us for, like, two years. He was, but hardly doing anything. We couldn't get him on the phone. The last straw was we literally could not get him on the phone for, like, two months. So, our tour manager, Tommy Rat, started kind of managing us. Just kind of because Creighton wasn't. We talked to Creighton on the tour we did with Relient K. We told him, 'Look, this is not good.' He took it real well. He said, 'I agree. Let's just part ways.' I think it was a load off his shoulders as well. So, Tommy had a big part in why Tooth & Nail was kind of open to us again; and vice-versa. He was the one that kinda said, 'This label has, like, 80% of your releases. Why aren't you talking to them?' He just basically cold-called Brandon and started … opened the door to work with us again. That was the re-release of *Let It Happen*. We recorded a few songs with Aaron Sprinkle again, who was, from *Pokinatcha* on, has done pretty well for himself … and made a name. So, we were stoked to work with Aaron. We did a few songs with him. Since we were on a one-record basis with Side One Dummy, we were done with them. We put out a record and an EP – *Let's Rock*. They were just songs that needed somewhere to go. They were just basically sitting around doing nothing. Some of them were demos from *The Ever Passing Moment* and all that kind of stuff.

"So, with *Secret Weapon* we went back to Tooth & Nail, who basically gave us an offer we couldn't refuse and so we went with Aaron Sprinkle with that as well and so, yeah, we were really happy with that whole thing. For me, it was quick. I was super-busy with the recording of it, because I was in Costa Rica, actually, at a friend's wedding that was planned like a year ahead of this time. And it just happened to coincide right at the very beginning of recording *Secret Weapon*. So, I was kind of the jerk that was in Costa Rica while they were loading all the gear into the studio," he laughs. "I got there at 8 at night. They were joking around. They had my drums set up. As soon as I walk in the door, they go, 'Alright, let's go!' They put the headphones on me and sat me down and they're like, 'Alright, are you ready to go?' Just kind of a joke," he says with a deflated tone, as if the punchline didn't go over too well. "So, I was there for, like, two days. I just banged my drums out. I had to come back home, because we were moving, so of course I wasn't there for a lot of the recording, but it was just, 'Wham! Bam!' Since *Panic* we were just all about not spending too much time on records. I thought it came out great. Aaron did a great job. He did an amazing job."

On The Cover II

"I did all the drums – almost all the drums a year and a half ago. It's kind of funny to come back to it again. 'Alright! My job's done here! Thank you very much.' We had a few songs to do. We recorded part of it in our old studio. Mike, in the meantime, has built another studio, so we recorded the rest of it there. But it's just us. It's so mellow. We go in, 'Alright. Monday!' I'm at home a lot with our daughter. My wife works full-time and goes to school, so she's super busy, so it's like, 'Alright, I've got five hours on Monday. I'll come in and do the drums and we'll just bang it out and they do the rest of it. It's pretty efficient when it's just us. And you're not paying anybody. It's just different now. It used to be going into the studio to record was like going on a road trip. You were gone for two months. With *Before Everything And After* we lived in LA for four months. My wife was up here going to school. She was going, 'This sucks!' But now it's just up the street. It's so much more mellow. It's the wave of the future. Doing it all yourself."

In having so many guest musicians play on this one (like Tsunami Bomb's Agent M and Craig from Chiodos), MxPx was able to personally hear from other artists about the impact their music has had. "The majority of the guests on this record grew up fans of the band to one degree or another. For me, the special part of having these guests… Obviously, just because it's fun to have other people involved in a project, is to just kind of see the reach that we've had without really knowing it. It's cool."

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TO CALL ZAO ANYTHING SHORT OF PIONEERING AT THIS STAGE OF THEIR NEARLY 16-YEAR CAREER WOULD BE A TRAVESTY. COUNTLESS OF THE CURRENT WAVE OF METAL AND HARDCORE BANDS OWE A GREAT DEAL OF HOMAGE TO THIS INFLUENTIAL OUTFIT. THEY REMAINED ONE OF THE MOST COMPELLING METAL BANDS YOU WILL ENCOUNTER – HAVING SURVIVED AND THRIVED THROUGH EVERY SUCCESSIVE INCARNATION OF THEMSELVES, ENDURING MEMBER CHANGES AND INTERNAL CHAOS THAT HAS TENDED TO OVERSHADOW THEIR MUSIC AT TIMES. BUT NOW, WITH THE RELEASE OF *AWAKE?*, THEIR 9TH STUDIO ENDEAVOR, THEY CELEBRATE STABILITY WTHIN

Finally Awake?

BY ANDREW SCHWAB

THEIR RANKS, WHICH HAS BROUGHT A CALM THAT THEY HAVE YET TO ENCOUNTER IN ALL THEIR YEARS. STILL BREAKING NEW GROUND AFTER ALL THIS TIME? YES. BECAUSE THAT IS WHAT ZAO DOES. AND IT SHOWS IN THE NEW MUSIC... THAT THEY ARE, ONCE AGAIN, HERE TO PUSH BOUNDARIES AND GO TO NEW PLACES SELDOM TRAVELED. I SPENT SOME TIME CHATTING RECENTLY WITH SCOTT MELLINGER, THE BAND'S GUITARIST, TO SPEAK ABOUT LONGEVITY, SPIRITUALITY, AND SONICS:

AS: As a band that has survived over a decade, what is your motivation to keep moving forward? Do you have goals you feel you have yet to accomplish, or if the band ended today would you be satisfied with your legacy?
Scott: If the band ended today, I would be totally happy. What keeps me motivated to continue forward is the thought of people listening to our music and liking it and the thought that they will be as excited by it as I am. But, even if nobody liked our music, I would still want to write and record, as music itself keeps me motivated. As far as Zao's legacy, I would be satisfied with it. But as a musician, you are never really satisfied – you always want to achieve better. But instead of achieving within the realm of the industry's standards, my definition of achievement is to get more broad and grow in different directions. And I'd like to see Zao's legacy broadened in that sense.

It seems Zao has found a sense of peace with the current lineup, with this being the second consecutive record without any member changes. How does the mixture of the current members lend itself to this stability vs. past lineups?
As a band we are just in a good place where we all have the same goals. We're having fun and we're not overdoing things that would make us want to split up or stop.

What are the sonic and lyrical qualities that define *Awake?* as a unique record for you?
Sonically, we've taken everything we've always liked about other bands' records, but were never able to do with a Zao album – guitar sounds, drum sounds, that type of thing. And I think the strength of the songs and the various parts made the album able to be recorded this way. There's not a lot of mess going on, so the guitars and bass can breathe and the drums can sound nice and big.

What is the story behind the album title?
As people and a band, we feel that there are things that happen in reality that people aren't aware of. Lyrically, this record deals with a lot of those topics. "Awake?" is about how people think they know what's going on, but, do they really know? Because, I think if they really did, they wouldn't be as apathetic as they are.

How would you describe the current incarnation of your live show?
Comfort. We know exactly what we want to be as a band, how we play together and what we want to show to the crowd. It's hard to find that comfort-zone for a lot of bands, but we are all comfortable now.

What did Tim Lambesis and Daniel Castleman bring to the table with their involvement with the record?
Tim and Daniel brought a lot of good ideas in terms of the album's overall sound. Daniel and Tim both have an ear for different tones and put in a little bit of that. We've been making Zao records for so long, mostly produced by ourselves. Those guys are fans enough of the band to understand exactly what we wanted to sound like and how we should sound and they achieved that with flying colors.

Photo: David Schrott

Talk to me about the story and influence of the recent death of your close friend had on the new record.
A mutual friend that was very close to me in high school decided that life was too unbearable to take. It brought a personal touch to the lyrics, similar to *Where Blood & Fire Bring Rest*, which opened up a wound for Dan, as most of that album was about similar circumstances. The fact that we have an outlet to be able to write about such a terrible situation is one of the reasons we continue to do this band. And one of the things that seems to make people feel connected to it.

As veterans of the the music industry, you have seen the ups and downs of record sales and touring over the past several years, having experienced both the "boom" of the early part of this decade, as well as the current economic bear market. How has this affected how you navigate playing music full-time? Do you supplement your living in the band with outside careers?
We all realized that as a band, playing the types of shows people expected us to play, it was financially impossible. We were opening for a lot of bands, a part of a lot of packages; but it just gets too hard, especially when you have a family. The record sales going up and down never bothered us, as we never gauged ourselves by that. Being a band that doesn't tour right now, seeing the excitement online about our new album means everything for us. If two people care about our band, that's better than no one caring. But we no longer tour full-time.

What is the one piece of advice you could offer to up-and-coming bands in heavy music?
Do something different! Come up with a sound that hasn't been tried or popularized. Do whatever you feel like you want to do and be happy with what you're doing and you'll never be disappointed. In this industry, disappointment is rampant. Everyday is a disappointment if you let it worry you. So don't!

The band has taken a greater role in the production duties this time around, with you recording a large part of the instruments yourselves. Does this present greater challenges or more freedom in the process?
Extremely more freedom! Way more freedom. The challenge for me was listening to someone tell me how to play the song that I wrote. It's more freedom, more comfort and I can be as picky as I need to be, because I'm the one that writes the damn song and I'm the one that should be able to tell if it's good or bad! I've been part of enough recording situations at this point to know my way around, so I wasn't intimidated to take most of it on by myself.

In the early days of Zao, a perception was built through touring, lyrical content, and association with Tooth and Nail that the band had some very specific spiritual leanings. How would you say, both personally, and in the band as a whole, the spiritual element of the band influences what you do today?
Yes, at first – especially in the splinter days – Zao was a ministry band first and foremost. But, in 1997, when Dan joined, I think he took the spirituality of the band in a new direction. I know they considered themselves Christians, but they rallied against organized religion; which, to me, is strange, because Christianity is a religion, so it always confused me. After joining, though, I started understanding what they were going for. I think all of us can agree that the church is not where it should be and they felt that. I think that spirituality is still something all of us think isn't a bad thing at all. Me, personally, I feel that life is spirituality and I look at every day with amazement. But, is it something that we use as our main focus in the band? No.

Speaking of lyrics, what songs (and the stories/ideas in those songs) do you think the kids will connect with the most and why?
I think this record will definitely raise eyebrows lyrically. We delve into topics that aren't exactly the norm and we raise questions that might open up people's minds somewhere they don't want to be opened to. There are some very personal songs, also, that deal with a friend's suicide, love lost and the epidemic of apathy in our culture. It's hard to say what fans will connect with, because everyone likes different things. I hope they read the lyrics and find something interesting. People need to start thinking for themselves and researching what is going on around them, that is what I hope people connect with.

"I think that spirituality is still something all of us think isn't a bad thing at all. Me, personally, I feel that life is spirituality and I look at every day with amazement. But, is it something that we use as our main focus in the band, No?"

What makes your sound, your show, and your imagery continue to be compelling?
We are very humble and the fact that people have any interest astounds me. I think the main thing that keeps us around is the fact that we stay real. We are no different than the people that come see us and buy our records. It saddens me to see all these bands act like they're so depressed and dark; and when you come up to them, they snub you like you're a peasant. We know what it's like to struggle and have dark moments, and that is what grounds us. Everyone is the same and we are all connected, so we need to start realizing that; or we're in trouble. I think what is compelling about us is that people find out we are like them and they get connected to us in a way that can't be faked.

Scott, speak about your views on theism vs. atheism:
Ahh, the question to end them all. Well, let me start off by saying in no means am I an atheist. Atheism is no different than religion; only that their belief is that they know without a shadow of doubt that there is nothing. That is just another simplistic way to deal with life. Zao is a collective of different views and beliefs that come together with respect for each other. I do not claim to know anything. I hate the arrogant mentality that any religious belief gives you. Faith doesn't give people the right to tell you that you are wrong. I think the funniest thing about Christians is the fact that everyone talks a good game, but no one follows the actual teachings of Jesus. Why is there so much judgement from people? Isn't that like putting yourself in God's shoes? I thought that was His job. Life is beautiful and we should cherish it no matter where it came from. Religion is another control tactic that rips people apart, and puts out in the open our differences. There is no difference, all life is the same. Everyone deserves eternity no matter Christian, Muslim, Buddhist or Atheist.

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Photo: David Schrott

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BY MARK SALOMON

FIRST THINGS FIRST: I WAS PRETTY SURE I'D NEVER HEARD OF HOUSE OF HEROES.

I was pretty sure I'd hate them.
I was pretty sure that talking to Tim Skipper would do little to change either of the above points.
Hmm...
I was also pretty sure buying a condo would be a sound investment, and by now I'd be sitting on a solid, high five-figure cushion of equity.
In a surprise to no one but myself, it turns out that I really don't know very much. And now that I've well surpassed the spins of *The End Is Not The End* necessary to write a piece on House of Heroes' latest, I must concede that I listen to it...
gasp
...willingly.

Additionally, I have also conceded my conversation with Tim Skipper was not only refreshing, but encouraging as to the current state of Rock Music. Apparently, not all bands think paying dues means finding a new alternative to their rapidly dwindling MySpace page, getting Timbaland to produce one of their songs or lasting all the way to the top-20 of a nationwide popularity contest. In fact, it appears that people still make music because they love making music. Imagine that.

You may be asking, "Why the hostility?"

Maybe because I'm tired of all the posturing. After a while it seems like it's all anyone can expect to encounter in this weird world of music. I've seen plenty of it over the years, so I tend to approach slowly – no sudden movements, low expectations.

I say these things, I make these declarations and then… I talk to a guy like Skipper and I'm reminded that not every one of these articles needs to be treated like a street fight. He was humble, polite and so unpretentious that I literally didn't know what to do with my sarcastic self, initially. I found a guy open to talk about anything from influences to ambitions and left the interview feeling a little embarrassed I'd ever thought this band could be so … typical.

After years – seven as House of Heroes, eleven altogether – of loving labor and enough heartache to break up any band, the band has put out what is clearly their defining work with *The End Is Not The End*. (I'd call their first full length, *Say No More*, the beginning of something much larger. Nice moments, but consistently not quite at this level.) What's more impressive than sticking together long enough to write your best album? Try actually putting it out…

"The album was finished in '07. We sat on it for a year because Gotee was in a distribution transition and we wanted to explore other options while they got settled. We were looking at a subsidiary of Warner Brothers, but right when the band was about to jump in, WB closed the label." Since nothing from real life ever happens in crisp little time frames, "During that transition, we went on tour with Relient K. In order to have a physical copy of the album, Gotee put one out, so that we could have it for the tour."

That might sound like a fairly small batch of hurdles to cross, but if I'd spent the time to put together an album and the release wasn't initially smooth, I think I'd be convinced God didn't like the record or something. Thankfully for the rest of us, these guys powered on. While it wasn't ideal, in the end Gotee got the distribution handled and the band was able to expose a huge audience to their music. *The End Is Not The End* was eventually made available online last September and is set for a March release in stores.

"When you first start you have all your dreams and ambitions … then reality hits, and eventually cynicism. If we weren't as close, we probably wouldn't still be doing this. In hindsight, it might be better. You learn things – we learned that we love making music because we love playing together."

The trials and tribulations leading up to the album's eventual release may not have been ideal, but the vision behind *The End Is Not The End* seems slightly more meaningful in light of those trials. When asked about a central theme, he replied, "The album asks, 'How do you find hope and goodness?'"

What temporary, here-and-gone band asks questions like this?

As I watched a solid half an hour (maybe just a little more…) of their webisodes and "pageants" on YouTube – I saw a band that was comfortable enough together to lighten up – an ability that can only come from time, trust and fighting through rough patches together. Watching them, you see a band not overly bothered by some of their challenges. These aren't songs of darkness and rage, but healthy, addictive Pop Rock tracks that explore the full range of emotions.

As far as the album itself is concerned, the influence of artists like Jimmy Eat World might be the most obvious, but with a few listens one will find this is by no means a Christian version of some well-known band. There are layers and arrangements here that would make Queen proud, and some moments that down right rock balls. "We started off playing MxPx covers in the basement," says Skipper. Since then they have clearly morphed into something much more formidable, as evidenced by songs like "Lose Control" or even the first "single" – voted on by fans of the band – "In The Valley Of The Dying Sun." At points heavy and powerful, at others simply passionate and beautiful, the album provides real peaks, real valleys.

Some of these vocal performances raise the bar for the Post-Punk/Pop-Rock genre, and they certainly bear mentioning. Songs like "In the Valley…" or "Code Name: Raven" or even "Field of Daggers" display a level of control and performance I just don't hear much of these days. (Plus: the backing vocals on "Dangerous" would make old arena groups like The Alarm weep with joy. I count that as a bona fide good thing.) Thoughtful, intelligent, even clever, the lyrics aren't of the usual "I Love You This Much" variety, but actually fit the mood set by the music – an art that seems somewhat lost in the pre-fabricated suburbia of today's Rock n' Roll.

While there are a number of different directions the band explores on *The End Is Not The End*, the focus is still evident. "We had a plan," says Skipper, "We wanna make catchy music. We all love Pop music, but the lyrics, music, and everything need to come together."

I came to this piece armed to the teeth with a healthy dose of jaded heart, so sure I was in for a disappointment, but… I was forced to lay that aside. There just was no reason for it, and certainly no cause for concern that they were just one more collection of musicians passing through. This is a band in the traditional sense – in the best sense, says me – and that should be obvious to anyone paying attention. This isn't some short-term collection of musicians, put together by a guy with a monocle and cigar in some shadowy room. They are collectively creating some pretty special music – of that, I'm sure.

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DEMON HUNTER
LIVE IN NASHVILLE

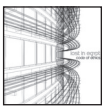
This is the real test. The songs may have sounded good on the live DVD, but how would they do without any visuals to lean on? The good news comes in waves: the set list is about perfect; the sound levels are punching high at all the right levels; the vocals are solid, never fading; and the musical performances are tight. There's only a few of the "audience sings along, so the lead vocals drop out" instances. [SOLID STATE] DOUG VAN PELT

MIKE FARRIS & THE ROSELAND RHYTHM REVUE
SHOUT! LIVE

Not that I've ever worked in a record company's A&R department, but it's probably safe for me to say that new artists aren't generally advised to reprise much of their debut album on their follow-up. Nor should that sophomore set be a concert record. If, however, you've already appreciated former Screamin' Cheetah Wheelies frontman Mike Farris's solo debut, *Salvation in Lights*, you're likely to be stoked about *Shout! Live*. Farris's first album brought together New Orleans and Memphis jazz and R&B influences with incendiary gospel passion, sure; but here, in a Nashville nightclub, he's practically having church. Really. Those songs he already assayed on his previous project get taken to a higher, more intensely testifying level. The few new ones continue the theme, making for one sweaty, lungbusting liturgy in song. And if Farris's sound wasn't gloriously fulsome enough, he adds more country to his mix by dipping into the Carter Family catalog, not to mention a stark Porter Wagoner remake from a separate performance. The McCrary siblings earn their billing with their own take on a Fairfield Four number (one of them's the gals' dad), and a tambourine solo! Farris's aesthetic's sincere as it is engaging, traditional as it is personal; if it doesn't move you, check your pulse. [INO/COLUMBIA] JAMIE LEE RAKE

PHIL KEAGGY
THE MASTER AND THE MUSICIAN:
30 YEARS LATER TOUR (DVD)

30 year ago, an all-instrumental Jesus guitar album seemed radical. It's still a little out of the ordinary – even today. Yet it also points out what a true genius Phil Keaggy is, and was, even way back then. This album is re-imagined live, along with many talented friends, such as fellow guitarist Ric Hordinski. Throughout, Keaggy excels at everything from folk, to classical, to good old rock & roll. The second half, titled Act 2, even features a smoking version of "Time." [STROBE] DAN MACINTOSH



CODE OF ETHICS
LOST IN EGYPT

It's been about a decade since Code Of Ethics released a full-length, but the band has certainly not lost its synth-pop touch. *Lost In Egypt* is a fitting title for the CD because, much like God's people in the Old Testament, COE sometimes sounds like it's searching for direction. "Were You There" ups the BPM around the lyric of an old gospel song, whereas "Beautiful Lamb" is straight worship. There's even a cover of Depeche Mode's anti-racism rant, "People Are People." Nevertheless, as good as these tracks are, they don't always fit together well. As an added treat, however, this disc includes a second take on the title track, which speeds up the rhythm and adds extra guitar to a song about man's struggle with sin. *Lost In Egypt* may not tell a straight, linear story, but sometimes it's fun to just get good and lost in the music. [RAZZBARRY] DAN MACINTOSH

TOR & SUFJAN STEVENS
ILLINOIZE

Sufjan Stevens may have just simultaneously flummoxed some of his current fan base while expanding it among a heretofore unexpected audience. Montreal-based DJ Tor expected the latter potential, anyway. Interpolating samples from Sufjan's '05 epic salute to the Land of Lincoln, *Illinois*, his box set of Christmas EP's and a couple other albums amidst hip-hop beats and pre-existing a capella vocal tracks from various rappers, this seven-track mash-up plays like an extended dialogue of opposing and coinciding values. The open-hearted, seeingly egoless, melancholic nature of Christendom's fave freak folkie extends to his instrumental soundscapes, so it makes for disconcerting revelations to hear them bragadociously counterpointed against or intensified in intent by rhymes from Outkast, Aesop Rock, C.L. Smooth and Blackalicious's Gift of Gab. There's even some peculiar, sometimes pottymouthed eccumenism-of-a-sort-by the placement of Sufjan's music to couplet spitting by adherents to different kinds of Islam, including Brother Ali, Big Daddy Kane and Brand Nubian leader Grand Puba. Not for Stevens' fans who want their hero's music free of profanity, but it's an often poignant, fun experiment that works better than it might appear on paper. Here's waiting for Kanye West to discover Asthamatic Kitty Records' best-selling act, too. [ILLINOIZE.BIZ] JAMIE LEE RAKE

HUSBAND & WIFE
DARK DARK WOODS

Unlike their name might imply, there's no married couples here. It's a band that calls Bloomington, IN, home and makes some very smooth and ethereal mood music. Soft, subtle songs with droning, atmospheric guitars – the kind that'd make ideal movie soundtracks. Their mastery of restraint is not only found in their sugary pop indie rock music, but their lyrics as well. In the humorous "I Got Fat," they turn an ode to slackerness into a reactionary statement about love: "I meant to take you to the bank, but I got fat instead ... and I meant to drive less, but a lot of places are far away / I meant to clean up and get my head right once, but then I get my act together /You aren't the only one to tell me I'm wrong about love." [CROSSROADS OF AMERICA] DOUG VAN PELT

SUPERDRAG
INDUSTRY GIANTS

This reunion album by Superdrag should place the band firmly back into the minds of its many college/alternative rock fans. Punching out of the air with its first song, "Slow To Anger," the band sounds not too unlike post-hardcore favorites, Thrice. In fact, this sound could easily have fit within the contest of the *Vheissu* album. "Live And Breathing" slows the tempo down a little bit, but the band's energy just churns beneath and inside of the low end. [SUPERDRAG SOUND LABORATORIES] DOUG VAN PELT

AS CITIES BURN
HELL OR HIGH WATER

No longer a heavy hitting imprint of Underoath, As Cities Burn has completely buried and burned their screamo and metalcore roots with their third album, *Hell Or High Water*. Continuing where they left off with *Come Now, Sleep*, the band's lush evolution has led them to create subtly devised and pulse driven songs. As if a more amped The Snake The Cross The Crown or a rougher Copeland, the songs are ripe with fervor and Southern sway. The track "Capo" even evokes dance punk. (Maybe it's time they accept their natural sound and change their hardcore moniker). [SOLID STATE] DAN FRAZIER

VOTA
S/T

VOTA is going to sound familiar. It might be the similar sonic tendencies to Newsboys, since front man Bryan Oleson used to be their guitarist. Then again, the artists-formerly-known-as-Casting-Pearls made a similar sounding effort just a few years ago. So even the new name, new band member and new label (INO) won't free this self-titled album from the commonalities of the genre. Still that doesn't mean all is lost. Producer Nathan Dantzler does a fine job incorporating interesting elements into songs that should be instantly forgotten. The Southern charm thrown in saves "Be Mine" from being skipped and the dance rock pulses on lead-off single "Hard To Believe" start things on a decent note. "Give It To Me" sounds a bit like Kevin Max and similar bits and pieces are heard throughout VOTA. In the end, however, VOTA is Casting Pearls; is every other pop/rock band out there. It's okay and I guess that's okay. [INO] MATT CONNER

AUBURN
BASIC INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE LEAVING EARTH

Like Maylene & the Sons of Disaster without as much Southern Rock guitars. The five heavy tunes on this EP will grow fast on most pairs of functioning ears. Some of the drumming and metal chugs are standard and without the production punch that could make it really primo, but it's tight. [BLUE DUCK] DOUG VAN PELT

What **Jack's Mannequin** Says

ANDREW MCMAHON, THE CREATOR BEHIND JACK'S MANNEQUIN, INFUSES HIS MUSIC WITH A BRIGHT HOPE AND MELODIC BOUNCE THAT SEEMS TO SOMEHOW COMMUNICATE A JOY THAT HE IS SURE TO HAVE AFTER SURVIVING A FIGHT WITH CANCER. THE BAND'S SOPHOMORE FULL-LENGTH ALBUM, *THE GLASS PASSENGER*, KEEPS SPREADING ITS INFLUENCE ON THE RADIO AND OTHER MEDIUMS (LIKE TV AND THE INTERNET). HIS SOULFUL VOICE AND SKILL AT WEAVING PIANO-DRIVEN MELODIES PLACE HIM IN GOOD STEAD ALONGSIDE ARTISTS LIKE NEW AMSTERDAMS, THE ROCKET SUMMER, OR EVEN THE FRAY (WHO HE'S TOURING WITH SOON). IT WAS A PLEASURE TO SIT DOWN WITH HIM FOR A FEW MINUTES FOR THIS INTERVIEW.

If you had the power to guarantee that an entire audience would leave one of your shows with one of the following (and only one), which would you choose:
a) pleasure
b) self-esteem
c) hope
Why?
I'd have to go with pleasure on that one.

Any reason why?
I think everything you said is undeniably positive, but just me growing up going to shows, if you just left with that feeling of – if you just felt good and psyched when you leave and you feel like it transformed your head space… Obviously, so do some other things, but overall, the broader of the three things is the pleasure.

What are some of the worst things about Something Corporate? And what are some of the best things about it?
I don't know. I haven't really done much pondering on that subject for about four or five years! (laughs) I would hate to even say necessarily something I find bad about my old band or something in an article. I think the best thing about Something Corporate would probably be the chemistry that we had. It was sort of a band that was built on the backs of four very close friends. I think, in that sense, it really rang true when we would play, because there was that sort of chemistry of pure friends kind of getting together to play music. Worst thing? Our scenario sort of allowed us to get pigeonholed in a big way and stuck in a scene. For me, that was always the worst thing about Something Corporate was getting sort of mislabeled regularly as a punk band, like we're trying to sing for the piano, which was really never the intention. That was always the worst thing for me.

When did you discover that intelligence wasn't entirely forbidden in popular music?
I think I always knew that sort of inherently, because I grew up with some of my parents' records and pop music was always intelligent. The pop music that I generally listened to was always pretty intelligent. I think it's something that I've always carried with me. The thought that new music and popular music isn't just a simple format that is 'dumbed down.' And pretty intelligent lyrically … I think Counting Crows is a band that really communicated that to me on their first record when I was in sixth grade.

What do you think of Jesus Christ?
What do I think of Jesus Christ? I mean, he was incredibly misunderstood. I'm not a particularly religious person. I grew up a Catholic, so I had a lot of Jesus in my life at a young age. I think anytime you grow up as a Catholic and go the other direction, you maybe struggle with that a little bit. But, the older I get, the more I realize that he actually had a lot of brilliant and amazing things to say and maybe he's been brutally misconstrued…

Makes sense. What do you think of His claims to be "the Way, the Truth and the Life, no one comes to the Father but by Me?"
Well, I didn't hear it come from his mouth, so I don't know if that was his claim or not," he laughs. "But, yeah, not a… I believe that there are a lot of prophets out there. And there are a lot of people who have amazing things to say and can motivate people spiritually. Do I think that you have to believe in any one of

those to lead a fulfilled life or to be 'saved' – whatever that means – no. My opinion on that is to each their own and whatever you believe; you believe. I sort of tend to believe that what Jesus was speaking about was that universal truth of taking care of your fellow man and being honest and true to yourself and be good to the people around you and that's the way you'll … what you call 'salvation.' Nobody knows if there's an afterlife. I think at the end of the day it's more about what you spread through the world and what lives on through what you spread.

Tell me about the Dear Jack Foundation.
It's a foundation I started, obviously, after I recovered or was mostly recovered from when I had gotten sick. Just realizing that I had a lot of fans that seemed to care deeply for the cause and were motivating and sort of activating on their own. I thought it would be a good thing to sort of harmonize the culture of it a little bit, so that you could do the most good. That is sort of how the foundation came to be. We sort of reached out to all the various people that had been donating to this charity or that charity and said, 'Here, if you want to donate here, we can channel this money to all these different organizations and do the research for you, so you don't have to run out or be confused or just stop or just left in your tracks because you don't know where to go.' I think that was the big thing, was giving people the ability to just go to one place.

Even the very word "cancer" can strike fear into people's hearts. What was it like to be diagnosed with cancer and how did you beat it?
It's never easy, I don't think, for anybody to be diagnosed with cancer. But I remember definitely in this period of time to be a very spiritual undercurrent through the whole thing, myself. I felt like the best way to beat it would be to try and keep myself positive and look for inspiration and try and give inspiration to other people along the way. That, I think, was a huge foundation, knowing that there was something for me to come back to. I had an amazing support system with my family and my friends and my girlfriend at the time – my wife now.

I have to be honest and admit I don't know how to ask the next question. I was talking to your publicist about stuff and he mentioned that you had a "heavy story about your mom." What's that about, if you care to elaborate?
I think they're probably referring to the way I grew up as a kid. My mother's brother – my uncle – when he passed that was kind of the catalyst that got me on the piano and writing songs for the first time.

Speaking of piano, I'm going to skip down, because I had a piano question: Musically, I find the piano sometimes arresting. There's ways to capture the listener's attention and then deliver a punch. And you have some really beautiful playing on the song "Caves…"
Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

…You're welcome. Do you find it harder or easier to compose on the guitar or piano? And why?
Well, piano is really the only thing, because I don't know how to play the guitar virtually at all. I know a few chords here and there, and that's about it. Piano's always been my instrument for composition. I can't really speak to a comparison, but for me, I think what I… There was always one in my house when I was a kid growing up and when I found myself at one for the first time kind of writing a song, I just found it to be something that, for me personally, something very soulful about it. It was sort of … by putting my hands on those keys, it was sort of a way to kind of channel out whatever was on the inside – those things that you don't necessarily say or talk about or make a point to communicate to people. For whatever reason, I was able to put my hands on the piano and find that place where it could kind of come out by playing it. I never really played guitar.

What are some challenges to keeping a relationship going in the context of being professionally involved in music as opposed to, say, running a sandwhich shop or something?
Well, the obvious is you being away. Shifting in and out of modes is probably of all those things the most difficult. I think every scenario is different. You know, the sandwich shop owner might have to sit at the sandwich shop all day. Who knows? There's not necessarily anything either more or less difficult about it. I think, being at a place where you're on the road for x-amount of months and you're living in a scenario where you have a dozen people to breathe with and then you come home and you kind of switch modes. That, I think, is kind of an art-form in itself. One that I – more so than music – I study every day right now!" he laughs.

What are your future plans?
Gosh, if I knew what I was doing tomorrow… It's like, there's the obvious: that we're continuing to tour this record and get it out there. For me, the future is kind of almost a non-starter in a way. Especially when you get hit over the head with some (bleep) that makes you realize that it's not sort of a not-permanent situation. I try to do my best to focus on every day and where I'm living, rather than worry about the next one. But, obviously, continue to play and hopefully I can do that for as long as I'm out there.

How does anyone afford to live in Southern California these days?
That's a good question! I'm a dude that's obviously been blessed, so that's not a huge concern for me, but it's definitely something that a lot of people around here struggle with. I think the reason that people commit to the struggle is because it's so beautiful. There's sort of something extra-sensory about Southern California. It's not always necessarily always good, but there's an essence to it that makes you okay with living in a house half the size that you could live in or an apartment half the size that you live in. Just because you might get to wake up and drive by the Pacific Ocean.

That's a good point.
Now that I'm in Los Angeles, and I love Los Angeles, but I sorta grew up in a beach town. There's something magnetizing about it.

Is there any questions that you'd like or … is there any topics that you'd like to talk about?
I think you covered 'em. I appreciate you covering the charity aspect. I always like to notify people about that. It was a good round of questions. I appreciate it, man.

You bet. I appreciate your time. That's all I've got, unless you want to add to anything else.
Nah, I think you've got it. Thank you for your time. I appreciate you taking the interview.

You bet, man. Take care. I hope to see you on the road sometime.
Alright. Cool, man. Take it easy.

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"I grew up a Catholic, so I had a lot of Jesus in my life at a young age... But, the older I get, the more I realize that he actually had a lot of brilliant and amazing things to say and maybe he's been brutally misconstrued..."

LIVE REPORT

SXSW 2009
March 13 - 22

BY DOUG VAN PELT

AUSTIN, TX – South By Southwest was amazing this year. Even if people were talking about "this economy" a lot on the Trade Show floor, they were all rocking out at the clubs. This year, perhaps more than ever, the Interactive portion was bulging at the seams, ever pushing the techno-envelope. There were plenty of good movies, too. Here's a small taste of what your intrepid editor took in. *(see lots more at hmmag.com/blogs/doug)*

Movies: On opening night I saw ***I Love You, Man*** and ***Exterminators*** back-to-back and they were so funny that it was almost unfair to the first that I saw the second so soon. ***Trimpin*** was an amazing documentary about a genius/sculptor/musician guy that crafts super-creative displays that play. ***Wake Up*** was a documentary about a guy that started seeing angels and demons and it drove him to action. ***The Haunting In Connecticut*** was a horror movie based upon true events of the supernatural, and the real-life mother that told the story showed up for a Q&A afterwards. ***Anvil*** was a curious documentary that felt like part comedy a la *Spinal Tap*, where it almost felt like it was parody, part blind ambition a la *American Idol*, and part *School of Rock* for the love of metal. And ***Iron Maiden: Flight 666*** left no doubt that it was a serious heavy metal concert film.

Music: The week was full of "special" performances – lots of them, but the one that stood out to me the most was one put on by **The Lee Boys**. They were jamming to their pedal steel guitar sounds (a la Robert Randolph & the Family Band) and really rockin' the joint. Then they invited a genuine bluegrass band (with a historic pedigree, no less) – **The Travelin' McCourys** – to jam with them. They actually shared songs with each other and adapted each other's tunes as their own. It was top-notch improvisation in real-time. Too cool! **Viva Voce** played a terrific set (with a full band), where **Anita Robinson** showed her prowess as a world class lead guitar player. **Seabird** finished things up late on the first (Wednesday) night of the music fest, filling a small room and a postage-stamp-of-a-stage with a lilting, swirling and organic sound.

Like lots of artists making the trek to Austin, **Flatfoot 56** played several sets throughout the week. We caught them on an outdoor stage put on by Texas Rockfest (one of several non-sanctioned indie outfits that takes advantage of the several thousand add'l people in the city for this) and they quickly turned a curious crowd into an "oi" shouting and dancing bunch. **Brooke Waggoner** packed a medium-sized room with her doesn't-need-amplification voice, piano, string section and back-up singer. It was obvious why she has such a great reputation as an artist. Her voice and songs are awesome. **Anberlin** actually rocked a set that started after 2:30 am! The songs "Breaking" and "The Resistance" sounded very edgy, bright, and energetic. They saved "Feel Good Drag" as the last song at both sets I saw during the week, which the crowd ate up. **Shiny Toy Guns** played in one of the better rooms, sound and light-wise, due in part to it being filmed and broadcast live by Direct TV. It was interesting to hear an edited version of "Le Disko."

The Shackeltons reminded me of the first few times I saw mewithoutYou, because the music was an ever-flowing (and solid) backdrop to an uber-charismatic frontman (**Mark Redding**) that you couldn't take your eyes off. I felt like an edgy in-the-know media guy for having him write the last issue's "Declaration of Independents" feature. This band will totally win lots of new fans every time they play. **Frodus** reunited to play a rare and too-short set on the last day of the fest, as did **Family Force 5** over at Emo's for a big showcase party. Anberlin's **Stephen Christian** and **Christian McAlhaney** donned acoustic guitars and barstools for an **Anchor & Braille** set for a showcase by To Write Love On Her Arms.

For a week, the music industry felt real healthy. Hmm...

Clockwise from top: "The Doctor" w/The Lee Boys and The Travelin' McCourys; Anchor & Braille; Flatfoot 56; Seabird; Viva Voce's Anita Robinson. [Photos by Doug Van Pelt]

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Album reviews

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U2

NO LINE ON THE HORIZON

U2 assumes the title of world's biggest rock band without much dispute. This is probably due to not taking their celebrity seriously, but instead taking their music very seriously. True to their status, getting a new album from this Irish quartet is an exercise in patience, as the band apparently labors over each aural document like Michelangelo in the Sistine Chapel. The hype that immediately surrounds the street date is initially guarded and then quickly turns into a flurry of words, expectations, and buzz all gone amuck. Prior to the release of this one, the early words were "experimentation" and there were references to the shocking musical departure that was Achtung Baby! I probably wasn't the only fan to thus approach No Line On The Horizon with a certain amount of trepidation. Achtung Baby proved they could tilt the world at their chosen angle and do it with gusto and excellence; but if the band cared about my little list of demands, they wouldn't shake up their successful recipe too much.

After my first listen, I'm trusting my ears (the music) more than my eyes (the critical reviews and press hype). This is one great listen that flows from beginning to end – the pulsing title track, with its building crescendo reminiscent of "Until The End Of The World" and the exploding cadence (like "Where The Streets Have No Name") in "Magnificent" to a couple of tunes that almost stop for introspection, like "Moment of Surrender" (a la "In A Little While") and "Unknown Caller" (akin to "Crumbs From Your Table") to the bouncing throb that exhorts us to walk the talk of "Get On Your Boots" all the way to the fairly ambient electronic storyline hymn ("White As Snow") that tips its notes to "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" and the ending, almost spoken word ballad, "Cedars Of Lebanon," that could've been lifted from a Johnny Cash session. Instead of leaping off a cliff for a savage musical departure, it's more like they inserted all the songs from *All That You Can't Leave Behind* and *How To Dismantle An Atomic Bomb* and hit "blend." The albums should come with a consumer advisory sticker that says: "No Fear." ~~[INTERSCOPE] DOUG VAN PELT~~

Rating system

05 *CLASSIC*
04 *FABULOUS*
03 *SOLID*
02 *SUSPECT*
01 *AMISS*
***** *1/2*

AUGUST BURNS RED

LOST MESSENGERS: THE OUTTAKES

August Burns Red is easily one of the best – if not *the* best – metal-core band there is. When I heard there was going to be an EP of outtakes to their incredible official sophomore release *Messengers*, I couldn't wait to get my hands on it. It may have been that I was expecting that much more from them after their five-star *Messengers*, but I wasn't overly impressed with their *Outtakes*. It seems like they just wanted to exercise a little of their personality and humor – a one minute song called "To Those About To Rock" in homage to Southern Rock; an almost two-minute piano instrumental track. You've probably already heard their great cover of "Carol of the Bells" (featured on their MySpace and in trailers for the movie *The Spirit*), but other than that and two "new" songs, I was just looking for a little more quantity as well as a little more than demo versions and a couple fun tracks. ~~[SOLID STATE] DAVID STAGG~~

IMPENDING DOOM

THE SERPENT'S SERVANT

Impending Doom battled the dark side of humanity on their gorship heavy full-length debut, *Nailed.Dead.Risen.* back in 2007, but despite strong melodies and bass lines, they came across as another band stuck in a cramped, and stagnant, metal scene. Still under the influence of Christ, the California-based quintet takes on a tougher foe in developing their signature sound on their sophomore set *The Serpent's Servant* and it's an enormous victory. Though Impending Doom had fairly decent songwriting, their craft has dramatically improved. While there is still an abundance of catastrophic bass resonance, the inspirational grunts have become clearer and the guitar melodies are sharper than before. Quite simply, this rhythmic metal chaos makes highlights "City Of Refuge" and "More Than Conquerors" top-notch. Despite a few similar hardcore-influenced compositions like "When I Speak" and "In The House Of Mourning," which sour on their flavor, Impending Doom manhandles another batch of demons on *The Serpent's Servant* and inches closer to perfecting their identity. ~~[FACEDOWN] BEAR FRAZER~~

MXPX

ON THE COVER II

Punk rock bands have been covering pop songs for decades now, but more often than not, the joke is usually on the originals. Yet with *On the Cover II*, you get the feeling MXPX isn't joking around. The Go-Gos are saluted with "Vacation" and ex-Go-Go, Belinda Carlisle, is remembered via "Heaven Is A Place On Earth." Amazingly, each is played with joy, not sarcasm. A few fine pop-punk songs are also honored, including The Ramones' "My Brain Is Hanging Upside Down" and The Clash's "Should I Stay Or Should I Go?" MXPX members must have large record collections, because early U2 ("I Will Follow") and even earlier Queen ("Somebody To Love") are also included in the wide-ranging set. MXPX is certainly being sincere and not at all sinister here. ~~[TOOTH & NAIL] DAN MACINTOSH~~

OF MACHINES

AS IF EVERYTHING WAS HELD IN PLACE

Special attention is often given to those innovators of sound and the lone surfers of a fresh new wave; but, shall we say, sometimes space exploration is over-rated. Of Machines are not treading new ground in the 11 songs that make up *As If Everything Was Held In Place*, but they're bringing the rock as if it mattered ... and that counts for a lot when it's time to pick out tunes to just enjoy for pleasure's sake. Utilizing six humans to create all this sound, this Georgia outfit brings lots of atmosphere with building, chiming guitars that are delivered with the energy of a scream, but still smooth and melodic. Bennett Freeman, who mans "electronics" and some of the vocals, and Austin Thornton, drummer and "programmer" do excellent work on the art of fusing noise samples with the songs. ~~[RISE] DOUG VAN PELT~~

THE FRAY

S/T

We're all saturated in The Fray. From every ABC medical drama to every non-talk-radio station on the dial, it seems the Denver four-piece resides, well, everywhere. And that's for good reason, since Isaac Slade's pop sensibilities are already counted alongside the best in the business. Proof positive was found in spades on the band's debut, with "Over My Head (Cable Car)" and "How to Save a Life" spinning on playlists nationwide. Now comes the self-titled sophomore release, but don't worry about any slump here. The majority of the album is exactly what a Fray fan would hope for: memorable, epic choruses to sing to as loudly as possible. "You Found Me" and "Syndicate" keep the quasi-spiritual lyrics moving to piano pop arrangements bound for the charts. "We Build Then We Break" shows glimpses of what Slade could do if he left his piano bench. Besides this single track, however, the rest is more of the sugary same. ~~[EPIC/INO] MATT CONNER~~

CROOKED X

S/T

While kids have long sat at their musician parents' feet and picked up the craft of making popular music, it's still always a pleasant surprise when the little ones punch out huge metal power chords from their cabinets. Crooked X play heavy, plaster-to-the-wall riffage that could carry its own weight at Ozzfest. All accompanied by tough, angry and slightly old-school vocals. The big, swirling harmonies almost over-shadow the skilled musicianship with its mature sound. It's almost like what might happen if Motorhead's Lemmy fronted King's X and they had to play ten different variations on the Judas Priest song, "Hell Bent For Leather." The songs tend to almost beat themselves up with the sludge of its power. The party rock vibe of "Rock N Roll Dream" is a change-up of sound, but it would also certainly fit more comfortably in a decade or two before these lads were born. "Fade" could probably fit nicely on a Nickelback record. Do they rock better than the ficticious kid band in *School Of Rock*? Head and shoulders better. More than a novelty? Sure, but modern, fresh and relevant? Not much. ~~[EMI/METEOR] DOUG VAN PELT~~

THE APPLESEED CAST

SAGARMATHA

If The Appleseed Cast is lumped in the brain with countless other emo bands, you may want to give that mind of yours a spring cleaning. The overriding influence on *Sagarmatha* is Pink Floyd, in fact, not any sort of chemical or non-chemical romance. For instance, many of these twelve tracks have extended intros, long instrumental sections, and Roger down-in-the-mouth Waters vocals. Even so, there are moments during one song, called "A Bright Light," when the guitar has The Edge-like chiming qualities. *Sagarmatha* is Nepalese for Mount Everest, and with the first three tracks clocking in at seven minutes or longer, these individual recordings are mighty mountainous treks, to say the least. Although the band doesn't sound particularly joyous on this release, they don't sound Waters suicide-sad, either. One like "The Road West" might have been categorized as New Age. But in TAC's capable hands, it's simply majestic, epic rock beauty. ~~[THE MILITIA GROUP] DAN MACINTOSH~~

Ratings

	DV	Writer
U2 *No Line On The Horizon*	04*	
August Burns Red *Lost Messengers: The Outtakes*	04	02*
Impending Doom *The Serpent's Servant*	04	04
MxPx *On The Cover II*	03	03
Of Machines *As If Everything Was Held In Place*	03	
The Fray *S/T*	04	04
Crooked X *S/T*	03	
The Appleseed Cast *Sagarmatha*	04	03
Molly Jenson *Maybe Tomorrow*	04	
Mute Math *Spotlight EP*	03	03
Future Of Forestry *Travel*	04	04
Seventh Day Slumber *Take Everything*	03	02
The Welcome Wagon *Welcome To The*	03*	04
The Burial *Age Of Deceit*	03*	
Bradley Hathaway *A Mouth Full Of Dust*	03	03*
Decyfer Down *Crash*	04	04

MOLLY JENSON

MAYBE TOMORROW

Whenever a female singer gets a batch of good songs and sounds so well performing them that you can't help but stop to listen, that's a good thing. Whether it's names like Allanis, Sheryl, Melissa, or even Leigh and Rosie, you can add the name Molly to that list. It's not just Jenson's voice that's brilliant, either. Her pen is quite mighty. In "I'm Sorry For Me," she sings, "I'm sorry for this mouth of mine / It gets away from me." Certainly a great line, but musically speaking, no apologies are necessary from this chick. Not just every pretty voice gets to record a duet ("Do You Only Love The Ones Who Look Like You") with Jon Foreman, either. ~~[BULLY! PULPIT/NETTWERK] DOUG VAN PELT~~

MUTE MATH

SPOTLIGHT (EP)

Don't become too excited. There are really only two songs here. Of course, any amount of new material from Mute Math is cause for celebration. *Spotlight* EP picks up right where Mute Math left off, with eerily familiar percussive arrangements, haunting synth work and staccato guitar tones. It's well-worn territory for Paul Meany & Co., but that doesn't mean it's not worth catching. The central track present is "Spotlight," Meany's response to the band's rising fame. In fact, the third and fourth tracks (of a four-song EP) are also reworked versions of "Spotlight" – the first an instrumental and the second a remix from Son Lux (whose 2008 album *At War With Walls and Mazes* was one of my favorites). The other infant, "Clockwork," is lighter in its pop approach, but still feels quite familiar. For most, that won't be a bad thing and reminds us to look forward to the coming LP. ~~[TELEPROMPT/WB] MATT CONNER~~

FUTURE OF FORESTRY

TRAVEL

Travel, the new release from So-Cal natives Future of Forestry, is one of those rare nuggets that come along every once in a while that manage to straddle the line between being both accessible to the casual listener and uncompromising in its artistic integrity. While it treads water in the same pool as Muse and Coldplay and Arcade Fire, it is never overly aggressive and proggy, nor is it alienating or even the slightest bit twee. Rather, the band comes across as sincere, both lyrically and musically. And while the vocals are honest, where the band shines is in their ability to weave textures together – nearly everything sounds epic, achieved with strings and subtle tones and the interplay of melody rather than relying on the tried and true wall of huge power chords and pounding drums. Songs take time to develop, often ending in completely different places than where they started. The only time the disc seems to make a misstep is in the ballad "Closer to Me," which suffers only because the nod it makes to the late Jeff Buckley is a tad too obvious for my taste – but even it eventually finds its own way. (And, let's be honest here, if a band is going to go after a certain sound, they could do a whole lot worse than Buckley…) All in all, it left me wishing there was more than a paltry six tunes – and that may be the rarest quality of all. ~~[CREDENTIAL] MIKE HOGAN~~

SEVENTH DAY SLUMBER

TAKE EVERYTHING

Seventh Day Slumber set out to worship extremely loud with *Take Everything*. But the job was only half-finished, only half-rocked, if you will. For example, "Famous One" opens with a cranking, nearly metal guitar riff and also features an electric guitar solo with more of the same. Yet as soon as the band begins to sing the song's familiar words, it doesn't come off all that different from your typical (mellow) Sunday morning worship team. The same can be said for "Mighty To Save." The intro suckers you into thinking the tune will be transformed into something akin to Metallica To Save, only to wimp out during the verses/choruses. It's still a fine worship album because songs like "How Great Is Our God" and "Lead Me To The Cross" are two of the best praise examples today. It just doesn't quite go up to 11, as you expect it to. ~~[BEC] DAN MACINTOSH~~

THE WELCOME WAGON

WELCOME TO THE

Presbyterian pastor and his cutely mousey Mrs. get all indie-ish, singing their own human- and God-directed love songs and remake public domain hymnody, Danielson, The Velvet Underground and The Smiths, among others. Can't already guess the sound Vito and Monique Aiuto make out of all that? Add in their friendship with and production by Sufjan Stevens. Heard the last couple of his albums? Now y'got it? Maybe Stevens can't help but turn his amigos into adjuncts of his celestial high school marching band-meets angelic choir vibery (though he might want to add to his bag of tricks soon, too), but God bless it, that approach pretty well works to The Welcome Wagon's favor. That's especially the case when the accompaniment is at its most minimal or, go figure, its most bombastic. Thoughout, the couple's unaffected sincerity shines through nearly as a counteraction to the filigrees with which Stevens surrounds their sweet serenading. By album's end, it might seem like you've made friends out of one of the unlikelier couples to be primed for college radio acclaim – though goodness knows they'd make a great double bill with The White Stripes – and you may want to invite them to play your own church. Just watch how much they might ask you to pay their backing band. ~~[ASTHMATIC KITTY] JAMIE LEE RAKE~~

THE BURIAL

AGE OF DECEIT

The opening hammer-on notes and then the blast beats and heavy-as-a-trashcan-lid cymbal crashing are all the warning one needs to know that The Burial have come to inflict musical pain – the good kind – like hard-pressing massage therapy. Screaming vocals run roughshod over metallic runs up and down the neck of Todd and Jamey's guitars. It's easy to imagine their arms flailing up and down their instruments in a mad fury like guys being paid by the vehicle to dry off autos at a car wash. With only 5 songs on this menacing EP, it's almost over before the death metal hardcore onslaught finds a groove. Like an opening band doing its job, they're leaving us wanting for more. ~~[SANCROSANCT] DOUG VAN PELT~~

BRADLEY HATHAWAY

A MOUTH FULL OF DUST

The kids are indeed alright. In spite of what wanna-be Lester Bangs journalistic hacks will tell you, doom and gloom pronouncements of a plastic culture addicted to mp3 singles with all the life compressed out of them, the spirit of rock and roll lives on. (And, just in case your ears are slightly too charismatic, I mean "attitude" when I say spirit...) Take this kid Bradley, for instance. He's captured the kind of spark and sizzle that can inspire little Jimmy Pages and Jeff Becks in another land to pick up a guitar and pay homage with their feedback-drenched reinterpretations. From the middle of Nowhere, Arkansas, this kid and his competent band breathes life into dusty old wooden instruments like an old lady that unexpectedly remembers how to dance at a spring jamboree, taking all of our breath away for a few short, stunning moments. "Covered In The Blood" runs the gamut – from quiet Americana folk to foot stompin roots rock to an experiment in rage therapy – all in one song. The next two tunes keep the energy level high, with "Can't Get With This" even finding a way to fuse the lad's witty poems in the mix. This fella is working out his salvation with fear and trembling, but also with a pen and a beat-up guitar. It's unfortunate that the album starts to let the spark get away past the midway point, but the light that's shined in is so brilliant that it'll leave a lasting impression, like the high contrast photos in the album's artwork. ~~[INDEPENDENT] THE KERN COUNTY KID~~

DECYFER DOWN

CRASH

What is the sound of *Crash*? A scene snob decodes the Paul Ebersold production as the system failure of another corporate rock sellout. A jaded critic interprets the monster hooks and familiar riffs as the copycat clatter of its influences. The astute reader deciphers the metaphorical allusion to the band's snowstorm tour collision. None would be completely wrong, but these ears hears in Decyfer Down's latest the rumble and crunch of a darn good rock album. T. J. Harris has a true FM radio voice – and that's a good thing. Alternately brooding, impassioned, growling, speak-singing, wailing, and hitting those high notes spot-on, with power, there's a distinctiveness here that makes the band stand out. No, the songs aren't earth-shaking in originality, but in the language of nu-metal, post-grunge, along with several other familiar genres of HM, they still pack a chest-thumping wallop, all with choruses and melodies you'll be singing along with in no time. No instrumentalist absolutely blows you away with his prowess, but guitarists T. J., Brandon Mills, and Chris Clonts, together with drummer Josh Oliver, impress mightily with catchy riffs, varying dynamics and textures within each song, all sweetened by the strings, keys, and effects Ebersold has added to the mix. Whether it's the TFK-like rhythms of the title cut (co-written with McNevan), the sweet Southern Rock balladry of "Moving On," the propulsive anthem "Ride with Me," or the insanely catchy chorus of "Desperate," the relatable, honest lyrics translate good news without getting overly preachy. Not even the closing ballad, "Forever With You," which is only a wimpy arrangement away from being the next "Crashing Crowns" hit, can keep me away. With nearly every cut having a crack at radio, this *Crash* is no accident. ~~[INO] CAREY WOMACK~~

Read more album reviews on the "flip side" – page 49

DELIRIOUS?

MY SOUL SINGS (CD/DVD)

Delirious?' live audience for *My Soul Sings* is probably the loudest crowd response I've ever heard on a recording. The band opens with "Rain Down," where it is nearly drowned out by the singing and clapping of crazy fans. How cool is that? This is, after all, a worship band and not those hairy Foo Fighters, for Pete's sake! Although about half this show is comprised of selections from Delirious?' recent *Kingdom Of Comfort* release, there is also plenty of room for favorites, like "History Maker," "Deeper," and "Majesty." Leader Martin Smith comes off a little like Bono, albeit without all the ego mania. He knows how to be both a cheerleader and an excitable front man. Then again, he doesn't need to work too hard to get this already revved up crowd going. When his soul sang this memorable night, he never had to sing alone. ~~[SPARROW / EMI] DAN MACINTOSH~~

DOUG BURR

THE SHAWL

For Doug Burr, this is quite a departure from his vogue *On Promenade* offering from 2007 … but no less stunning. Blissfully stark, his Psalms-inspired project, *The Shawl,* takes the minimalist approach. Even the dreary artwork serves as a metaphor for this melancholy project, which was recorded in Texas Hall, instead of the standard studio. An earthy and organic compilation, songs like "A Thousand May Fall" and "My Voice Rises to God" boast a vintage feel, and gently frame Doug Burr's angst-wrought vocal (Fans of Jonathan Foreman's EP will love the stylings). "And We Will Be Saved" is positively haunting, with its fragile yet triumphant melody. A barrage of various, well arranged instruments and choral vocals anchor the words of Scripture into a true work of brilliance. It's obvious that this Texas-based artist meticulously crafted this album piece by piece, and listeners should revel in its luminosity, as well as the hopeful undertones of redemption. ~~[VELVET BLUE MUSIC] GRACE CARTWRIGHT~~

FM STATIC

DEAR DIARY

Like fast-food chicken pieces, FM Static's *Dear Diary* is full of filler. It sounds like Trevor McNevan and Steve Augustine picked ten pop-punk bands to model/copy this concept record after. From a bland version of Sum-41 meets Blink 182, to what sounds like a riff straight off of the *Tension* record by Dizmas on the song "The Unavoidable Battle of Feeling on the Outside," *Dear Diary* takes up 35.8 MB on your iPod. In fact, the FM Static bio even boasts "a Weezer like stomp" called "Man Whatcha Doin'?," which does indeed feature a cowbell during the chorus. The lyrics are half-baked, referring to seemingly unknown actions and thoughts with the bland use of nouns and pronouns such as, "This" and Things" to describe pivotal life occurrences. The melodies follow suit, never entering into an interesting musical atmosphere, but rather sticking as close to the major chords, traditional popular instrumentation and using as little sway as possible, thus successfully making sure *Dear Diary* says nothing new. ~~[TOOTH & NAIL] JONATHAN HARMS~~

HAIL THE BLESSED HOUR

BEAUTY DISTORTED

Tulsa, Oklahoma has certainly established quite the breeding-ground for promising rock and metal bands. Newcomers, Hail The Blessed Hour are working to keep that promise alive with the slaughtering riffs, breakdowns, and wide ranging vocals of their new full-length, *Beauty Distorted.* The band has already taken to the road in support of the release and has been showcased in the past with notable acts within the metal-core genre over their seven-year journey. Although the album has the making of a strong release, its influences are almost too distinct, and the generic nature of the genre has left this band a victim of its own derivatives. *Beauty Distorted* is nonetheless a solid effort where praise is due through this Sancrosanct Records imprint. ~~[SANCROSANCT] TYLER STRICKLAND~~

THE GREAT COMMISSION

AND EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW

Playing gospel music as heavy as a battleship sized anvil, The Great Commission, a six-piece hardcore/metal hybrid out of Redlands, California, has released their impressive debut *And Every Knee Shall Bow.* While flaunting raw, grinding, unabashed rhythm with dueling guttural vocal attacks, TGC isn't head and horns above its contemporaries sound-wise, but their power is infectious. The ten-track offering has hardcore sensibilities of veteran bands blended with deathcore's meanest acts, like The Acacia Strain. The drumming of Rodney Ramos is the instrumental strength of this band, strongly evident on "In a Time Where Hope Was Lost." As the title alludes, much of the lyrical makeup of the songs is apocalyptic and Scripture derived. It is a surety that any new disciples who came into the kingdom by way of TGC are believers who might need cochlear implants somewhere up the road. ~~[STRIKE FIRST] CHARLIE STEFFENS~~

DAN ZIMMERMAN

COSMIC PATRIOT

On his second solo longplayer, Dan Zimmerman lends his bassy baritone – think of a lost son in the lineages of Tom Waits and Isaac Hayes – to songs of oblique Christo-philosophical musings that mostly successfully find the nexus linking erudite folk rock and chamber pop to alt' country and gothic post-punk. If that sounds like a lot to wrap your ears around, intellectually; yeah, it kinda' is, but Zimmerman mostly weds his lyrics to sufficient hookiness to make it easier to ruminate on the depths to which he wants couplets to go into your mind. On at least a couple of occasions, Zimmerman sounds like he might be treading close to bloviation and fatuousness, or at least mismatching his ambitious thoughts to poetry that doesn't quite correlate to the profundity it seems he's attempting to convey. But, for your next mix tape's perfect link between Nick Cave and Sam Phillips, Zimmy may be your go-to guy. And for anyone else with a fondness for Mark Heard, Bruce Cockburn, T Bone Burnett and other singer-songwriters on the cerebral side of Christian musical expression, you'll likely want to get on board, too. Christian radio? I'm not holding my breath, but it's their loss, eh? ~~[SOUNDS FAMILYRE] JAMIE LEE RAKE~~

THE CHARIOT

WARS AND RUMORS OF WAR

Who could have foreseen that the band once only known as "the new project fronted by the original singer of Norma Jean" would have evolved into one of metalcore's most reliably ferocious acts? Two albums later, vocalist Josh Scogin returns with *Wars And Rumors Of War* as the only original member, but it's no secret that the infamously charismatic screamer always ran the show and will never have the heart to quit. By consistently drawing on swift and dense metal songs sprinkled with moments of lull, The Chariot satisfyingly delivers and continues their renown style. And like whiskey spilt over a campfire, certain tracks hint a sip of Southern rock sludge as if mixed in via osmosis due to their Georgia roots – but perhaps this accent was not unintentional. ~~[SOLID STATE] DAN FRAZIER~~

Ratings

	DV	Writer
Delirious? *My Soul Sings*	03	03
Doug Burr *The Shawl*	04	04*
FM Static *Dear Diary*	03	01*
Hail The Blessed Hour *Beauty Distorted*	04	03
The Great Commission *And Every Knee Shall Bow*	02*	03
Dan Zimmerman *Cosmic Patriot*	02*	03
The Chariot *Wars And Rumors Of War*	04	04
Demon Hunter *Live In Nashville*	04	
Mike Farris & the Roseland... *Shout! Live*	04	04
Code Of Ethics *Lost In Egypt*	02*	02
Tor & Sufjan Stevens *Illinoize*	02	04
Husband + Wife *Dark Dark Woods*	03	
Superdrag *Industry Giants*	03	
As Cities Burn *Hell Or High Water*	04	04
Vota *S/T*	03	02
Auburn *Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth*	03*	

DEMON HUNTER
LIVE IN NASHVILLE

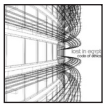
This is the real test. The songs may have sounded good on the live DVD, but how would they do without any visuals to lean on? The good news comes in waves: the set list is about perfect; the sound levels are punching high at all the right levels; the vocals are solid, never fading; and the musical performances are tight. There's only a few of the "audience sings along, so the lead vocals drop out" instances. [SOLID STATE] DOUG VAN PELT

MIKE FARRIS & THE ROSELAND RHYTHM REVUE
SHOUT! LIVE

Not that I've ever worked in a record company's A&R department, but it's probably safe for me to say that new artists aren't generally advised to reprise much of their debut album on their follow-up. Nor should that sophomore set be a concert record. If, however, you've already appreciated former Screamin' Cheetah Wheelies frontman Mike Farris's solo debut, *Salvation in Lights*, you're likely to be stoked about *Shout! Live*. Farris's first album brought together New Orleans and Memphis jazz and R&B influences with incendiary gospel passion, sure; but here, in a Nashville nightclub, he's practically having church. Really. Those songs he already assayed on his previous project get taken to a higher, more intensely testifying level. The few new ones continue the theme, making for one sweaty, lungbusting liturgy in song. And if Farris's sound wasn't gloriously fulsome enough, he adds more country to his mix by dipping into the Carter Family catalog, not to mention a stark Porter Wagoner remake from a separate performance. The McCrary siblings earn their billing with their own take on a Fairfield Four number (one of them's the gals' dad), and a tambourine solo! Farris's aesthetic's sincere as it is engaging, traditional as it is personal; if it doesn't move you, check your pulse. [INO/COLUMBIA] JAMIE LEE RAKE

PHIL KEAGGY
THE MASTER AND THE MUSICIAN: 30 YEARS LATER TOUR (DVD)

30 year ago, an all-instrumental Jesus guitar album seemed radical. It's still a little out of the ordinary – even today. Yet it also points out what a true genius Phil Keaggy is, and was, even way back then. This album is re-imagined live, along with many talented friends, such as fellow guitarist Ric Hordinski. Throughout, Keaggy excels at everything from folk, to classical, to good old rock & roll. The second half, titled Act 2, even features a smoking version of "Time." [STROBE] DAN MACINTOSH



CODE OF ETHICS
LOST IN EGYPT

It's been about a decade since Code Of Ethics released a full-length, but the band has certainly not lost its synth-pop touch. *Lost In Egypt* is a fitting title for the CD because, much like God's people in the Old Testament, COE sometimes sounds like it's searching for direction. "Were You There" ups the BPM around the lyric of an old gospel song, whereas "Beautiful Lamb" is straight worship. There's even a cover of Depeche Mode's anti-racism rant, "People Are People." Nevertheless, as good as these tracks are, they don't always fit together well. As an added treat, however, this disc includes a second take on the title track, which speeds up the rhythm and adds extra guitar to a song about man's struggle with sin. *Lost In Egypt* may not tell a straight, linear story, but sometimes it's fun to just get good and lost in the music. [RAZZBARRY] DAN MACINTOSH

TOR & SUFJAN STEVENS
ILLINOIZE

Sufjan Stevens may have just simultaneously flummoxed some of his current fan base while expanding it among a heretofore unexpected audience. Montreal-based DJ Tor expected the latter potential, anyway. Interpolating samples from Sufjan's '05 epic salute to the Land of Lincoln, *Illinois*, his box set of Christmas EP's and a couple other albums amidst hip-hop beats and pre-existing a capella vocal tracks from various rappers, this seven-track mash-up plays like an extended dialogue of opposing and coinciding values. The open-hearted, seeingly egoless, melancholic nature of Christendom's fave freak folkie extends to his instrumental soundscapes, so it makes for disconcerting revelations to hear them bragadociously counterpointed against or intensified in intent by rhymes from Outkast, Aesop Rock, C.L. Smooth and Blackalicious's Gift of Gab. There's even some peculiar, sometimes pottymouthed eccumenism-of-a-sort-by the placement of Sufjan's music to couplet spitting by adherents to different kinds of Islam, including Brother Ali, Big Daddy Kane and Brand Nubian leader Grand Puba. Not for Stevens' fans who want their hero's music free of profanity, but it's an often poignant, fun experiment that works better than it might appear on paper. Here's waiting for Kanye West to discover Asthamatic Kitty Records' best-selling act, too. [ILLINOIZE.BIZ] JAMIE LEE RAKE

HUSBAND & WIFE
DARK DARK WOODS

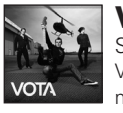
Unlike their name might imply, there's no married couples here. It's a band that calls Bloomington, IN, home and makes some very smooth and ethereal mood music. Soft, subtle songs with droning, atmospheric guitars – the kind that'd make ideal movie soundtracks. Their mastery of restraint is not only found in their sugary pop indie rock music, but their lyrics as well. In the humorous "I Got Fat," they turn an ode to slackerness into a reactionary statement about love: "I meant to take you to the bank, but I got fat instead ... and I meant to drive less, but a lot of places are far away / I meant to clean up and get my head right once, but then I get my act together /You aren't the only one to tell me I'm wrong about love." [CROSSROADS OF AMERICA] DOUG VAN PELT

SUPERDRAG
INDUSTRY GIANTS

This reunion album by Superdrag should place the band firmly back into the minds of its many college/alternative rock fans. Punching out of the air with its first song, "Slow To Anger," the band sounds not too unlike post-hardcore favorites, Thrice. In fact, this sound could easily have fit within the contest of the *Vheissu* album. "Live And Breathing" slows the tempo down a little bit, but the band's energy just churns beneath and inside of the low end. [SUPERDRAG SOUND LABORATORIES] DOUG VAN PELT

AS CITIES BURN
HELL OR HIGH WATER

No longer a heavy hitting imprint of Underoath, As Cities Burn has completely buried and burned their screamo and metalcore roots with their third album, *Hell Or High Water*. Continuing where they left off with *Come Now, Sleep*, the band's lush evolution has led them to create subtly devised and pulse driven songs. As if a more amped The Snake The Cross The Crown or a rougher Copeland, the songs are ripe with fervor and Southern sway. The track "Capo" even evokes dance punk. (Maybe it's time they accept their natural sound and change their hardcore moniker). [SOLID STATE] DAN FRAZIER



VOTA
S/T

VOTA is going to sound familiar. It might be the similar sonic tendencies to Newsboys, since front man Bryan Oleson used to be their guitarist. Then again, the artists-formerly-known-as-Casting-Pearls made a similar sounding effort just a few years ago. So even the new name, new band member and new label (INO) won't free this self-titled album from the commonalities of the genre. Still that doesn't mean all is lost. Producer Nathan Dantzler does a fine job incorporating interesting elements into songs that should be instantly forgotten. The Southern charm thrown in saves "Be Mine" from being skipped and the dance rock pulses on lead-off single "Hard To Believe" start things on a decent note. "Give It To Me" sounds a bit like Kevin Max and similar bits and pieces are heard throughout VOTA. In the end, however, VOTA is Casting Pearls; is every other pop/rock band out there. It's okay and I guess that's okay. [INO] MATT CONNER

AUBURN
BASIC INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE LEAVING EARTH

Like Maylene & the Sons of Disaster without as much Southern Rock guitars. The five heavy tunes on this EP will grow fast on most pairs of functioning ears. Some of the drumming and metal chugs are standard and without the production punch that could make it really primo, but it's tight. [BLUE DUCK] DOUG VAN PELT

Entertainment reviews
DVDS, BOOKS & GADGETS

01 AUSTRALIA
FOXHOME VIDEO

This brilliant drama is full of epic moments, like the young boy, Nullah (played energetically and with love by Brandon Walters), standing down a herd of rushing cattle on the edge of a cliff. The much-heralded movie makes a turn from tragedy onto the road to triumph when a simple dream is realized. One major problem gets resolved and other villains and troubles enter the story to lift the drama up and down and stretch it out to two-and-three-quarter hours. Many noble themes are presented, including: yearning for truth (even when it can't be proven) and cheering for it to prevail; letting go of control to free people, like Nicole Kidman's character (Sarah Ashley) wanting so bad to protect Nullah, but by fearfully holding on so tight she subjects him to more danger; the injustice of racism and ignorance; the motivation to change things and right wrongs ("Just because it is, doesn't mean it should be"); and the moral lesson: (if) "you got no love in your heart, you got nothing." There's a few moments of irony, as well. In one scene a villain is struggling with a priest, who protests, "I have the Lord on my side." To which the villain replies, "I don't give a damn who's on your side." The hero played by Hugh Jackman (the Drover) takes out the villain at just the last moment and tells the priest, "God works in mysterious ways, brother." Another bright moment is when the simple lines of text on the screen at movies' end scroll by, which talk about real-life facts regarding the Australian government and its treatment of Aborigine people. They gave up the official "Assimilation" policies in 1973, and in 2008 they made a formal apology to the "stolen generations" of Aboriginal children taken from their parents and homes. *Doug Van Pelt*

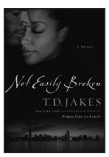
02 HOLYMAN UNDERCOVER *PURE FLIX*
This goofy flick has that over-the-top campy vibe that serves up a good time – but only if you're hungry for "low-brow" or "stupid" humor (think *Dumb & Dumber*). An Amish young man leaves the farm for Hollywood, hoping to spread the Gospel to a culture he's ill-prepared to face, like thugs, vamps, or playing Satan in a TV show. *DV*

03 THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL *FOXHOME VIDEO*
There's some great messianic threads in this film, like the guy who reports to the Klaatu character (Keanu Reeves), telling him that the human race is destructive and won't change. However, the incarnate alien has lived with the people down here for 70 years and loves them. He chooses to stay with them and die, if necessary. *DV*

04 BECOMING FAMILY *CINEVOLVE*
An eye-opening and heart-warming documentary on a group of medical students and American doctors (a Muslim and Christians) that went on a relief trip to Sri Lanka about six months after the devastating tsunami. While slow at times, the music and various interviews add a human element to the film, which also coincides with a wedding. *DV*

05 FAITH LIKE POTATOES *SONYPICTURES*
At times taxing and slow, and endearing at others, this flick is based on a true story of a white farmer that struggles to make a go of it in South Africa. He's ruled by anger until he surrenders to Jesus and then his adventurous life sees resurrection miracles and the joy of community. Kudos to the filmmakers for not avoiding pain. *DV*

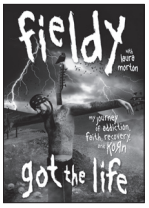
06 SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE *FOXHOME VIDEO*
Not at all what I expected, I appreciated the subtlety the filmmakers used to shine a spotlight on the horrific practice of the children and sex slave trade in India. A young boy's love takes the lad, Jamal (played by Dev Patel) on a journey to rescue a girl as he becomes a record-breaking contestant on India's *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire? DV*



07 NOT EASILY BROKEN *TRISTAR*
A realistic, humorous and painful look at marriage, this movie was adapted from TD Jakes' book, *Woman, Thou Art Loosed*, and narrates several key lessons on marriage throughout the movie. Clean in a street sorta way (10 uses of the biblical word for donkey), and Kevin Hart steals lots of scenes with his wit. *DV*

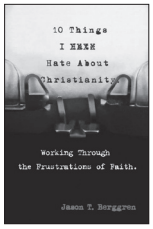
08 QUANTUM OF SOLACE *FOXHOME VIDEO*
The action in this movie is awesome (especially the fight scenes), but overall the story is hard to follow and it ends abruptly, like a television series pilot episode or something. It's like all the necessary Bond ingredients (guns, girls, cars, explosions) are included, but none of the cooks remembered to bring a great recipe. *DV*

	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08
SPIRITUAL RELEVANCY (%)	70	100	60	90	100	70	100	20
OBSCENITIES	2					8		3
SCENES OF GORE	1		2		2	1		
NUDITY / SEXUALITY	2						1	3



Got The Life: My Journey...
Fieldy with Laura Morton – Harper Collins

The life of rock star excess is the cliche out of which VH-1 built a goodly chunk of its programming for a while. Korn bassist Fieldy, however, lived the cliches of that excess to an unusually zealous extreme. As he relates in *Got the Life*, if there was a drug to ingest, a morsel of junk food to digest or a groupie to carnally conquer, nothing got in his way. Least of all kindness and decency. And as if to mimic the template of *Behind the Music*, circumstances – most prominently the death of his father – conspired to turn him around. The erstwhile Reggie Arvizu's conversion tales of debauchery, while having his hand in the rise of nu metal, prior to his Christian conversion make for compulsive page turning. That's not so much for the hedonistic exploits he details as his attitude during those self-destructive adventures. As a big, lost kid w/parental issues, he knew no better and acted like he thought a big time hard rocker should. Perhaps strangely, it's his renewed life that makes the more cumbersome reading. He certainly appears sincere and changed in his behavior, but somewhat doctrinally/congregationally ungrounded and a bit impressed with himself. And if it seems he sometimes finds "Christianity," "sobriety" and "positivity" synonyms for each other, that's reason enough to keep praying for this talented, aw-shucks kind of dude. *Jamie Lee Rake*



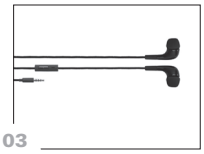
10 Things I Hate About Christianity
Jason T. Berggren – X Media

Give me a title like, *10 Things I Hate About Christianity*, and I'm curious. Tell me it's written by the founding frontman for Strongarm, and I'm reading it. The 10 things he hates? Faith, prayer, the Bible, sin, rules, love, hell, answers, church, and Christians (you knew that one would be there, huh?). What he really means by the title is he honestly struggles with these things. Each chapter dissects the object of his disdain, oftentimes unfolding like a narrative of his journey. Some of the most interesting tales involve his old hardcore band, but his blunt honesty shines in each story – even if it's not communicated with the viv and vigor of a Max Lucado. It doesn't take long to appreciate how he embraces each of these chapter topics, even in spite of their ability to inflict discomfort. *DV*

01

02

02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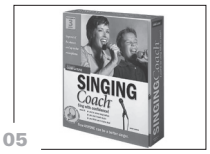

05

Gadgets
Energizer, Contour Case, Griffin, Carry-a-Tune

Energizer makes a portable power pack for cell phones, called **Energi To Go** (01), which is simply a 2-AA-battery pack plus attachment cords (make sure yours is compatible) to add fresh power when plugging in isn't an option ($19). Contour Case makes a nice laptop/**executive bag** combo case (02) that's nice and soft, with plenty of slots and netted pockets for pens, iPods, papers, etc. ($49). For the fortunate iPhone owners among the envious us, "the Griffin **TuneBuds** (03) are the best iPhone earbuds for the money ($39) and they have a mic to answer calls and 3 different ear pieces for a perfect fit," reports Dr. Tony Shore of obviouspop.com. "If you already have headphones you can get the Griffin **SmartTalk** headphone adapter cable (04) with mic and iPhone controls ($19). Both work with 1g and 3g iPhones."

One of the reasons I let my punk rock band dissolve was that I couldn't carry a tune in a bucket. Carry-A-Tune's ***Singing Coach*** software (05) is an immense help in learning to train my ears and really "listen" to my voice. Utilizing a similar technology that *Rock Band* and *GH World Tour* analyze the vocalist in the band w/, this software can track your note efficiency. Easy to set up and includes a mic/headset ($99). *DV*

[energizer.com, contourcase.com, griffintechnology.com, carryatune.com]

Surviving The Pit
Nicholas Olson

The music is loud, the crowd is pressing in around you, and you're not sure whether or not you are jumping up and down of your own will. 'How did I get here?' You think. 'How do I get out?' Most people learn how to mosh on their own, the same way a baby bird learns how to fly. Nothing can fully prepare someone for that first experience. A few rules to follow will, however, make that first experience go a whole lot better.

RULE# 1: COME PREPARED.
I went to a show once with a friend, who liked to drive in sandals. There's nothing wrong with that; sandals are comfortable. The problem was that he forgot to pack shoes. After a few tries at navigating the outskirts of the mosh pit, we took a quick trip into town so he could buy some cheap shoes to protect his feet. My friend's mistake illustrates the importance of preparedness. You won't want to have your backpack, purse, or overly full pockets when you are in a pit; get a friend to hold your stuff.

RULE# 2: KNOW YOUR LIMITS
My first official mosh pit was when I was in middle school. I stayed back from the front most of the time, but suddenly got the desire to try the mosh pit. I was a runt back then and the term rag doll would be necessary to describe my experience. The moral of this story is to know your limits. If you're getting knocked around too much, get out. It's much more fun to watch from farther away than get hurt & miss the show.

RULE# 3: KNOW YOUR SURROUNDINGS
At one point I found myself at the very edge of the pit, right at the front the stage. I decided to take this chance to stand & watch for a bit, but was unable to get outside the reach of the mosh. After getting elbowed in the back a few times, I turned around to face the mosh and defend myself. I did not see the stage diver landing on my head. It's always a good idea to pay attention to what is going on around you in the mosh, and you will always want to keep an eye on the stage.

RULE #4: KNOW THE ETIQUETTE
My unfortunate stage diver encounter could have been prevented by a bit of mosh etiquette. It is quite often that I am at a concert and take the time to warn my neighbor(s) about a stage diver or crowd surfer coming our way. You aren't just helping others by doing this; you are also preventing yourself from having to lift or catch someone by yourself. There are a number of "unwritten rules" of mosh pit etiquette. If you find a wallet, shoe, or something else on the floor, pick it up and hold it in the air. It is very common for someone to lose their personal effects in the mosh. If someone falls, immediately help them up. If someone is hurt, make room and help them if necessary. Everyone won't always notice in a loud, crowded pit that someone is hurt. Sometimes people want out, but the pit is too crowded or wild. Let people know and make room. You will also want to get along with people at the concert. Be kind to your fellow mosher and the security. Depending on the venue of the concert, the security guards may squelch stage diving and crowd surfing. Don't hate on them for it; they're just doing their jobs. Classic moshers and hardcore dancers don't always get along. Disagreements might be inevitable, so just let everyone do their thing. There is a kind of kinship or brotherhood in the pit. It will be more fun for everyone if we all just get along and enjoy ourselves.

RULE #5: KNOW THE LOGISTICS
I went to a concert at my high school and only vaguely enjoyed myself. The mosh was bad, terrible even. Throughout the concert I was subjected to teenage girls giggling as they ran around pushing each other. Moshing does employ what might be called pushing, but not walking (or running) up to someone and giving them a little push with your hands. Moshing isn't just pushing; mostly it is a form of dance, which can involve bumping into people. In a basic mosh you can expect to be jumping and bumping into people, often with your shoulder. Each mosh pit will be a little bit different. Getting in tune with the music being played and the crowd is part of the whole experience. True moshing has you in rhythm with the movements of the crowd without really trying. The mosh pit can be a strange sort of family. The best way to really learn, to connect, is to just jump in.

Devotions with Erin Parker

"Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be shaken but endures forever."
–Psalm 125:1

It was the Apostle Gump who said, "Life is like a box of chocolates: you never know what you're gonna get." Other philosophers suggest our existence is like a turtle (slow), or like underwear (changed daily, more or less). My friend Margie says, "Life is like a slice of pizza, because when it's good, it's really good; and when it's bad, well… it's still pretty good."

Maybe life is like a box of bad analogies.

For some people, life resembles a sandcastle: built in a few hours, trashed in a matter of seconds. Living near the ocean, I know something about sandcastles, and the ingredients are simple: two parts wet sand, one part plastic shovel, three parts determination. One morning of labor can bring your whole imaginary world to life, complete with bridges and towers and moats, but by afternoon everything is destroyed. Some uninvited soul will stomp through your work, or an angry wave will level your efforts. Or maybe wind will be the culprit, gently removing layer-by-layer until there is no proof your masterpiece ever existed.

There are times each of us can relate to that comparison. Unexpected forces erase countless hours invested in standing tall: we feel walked on, leveled, destroyed. As fragile as something built with wet sand and a plastic shovel.

David says in the Psalms that a man who trusts in the Lord cannot be shaken. This king knew heartache, sin, and attack at a deep level. But he also knew God, and that relationship transformed his life from the whirlwind it had once been to something secure as a mountain. Though the waves of life crashed, it was his trust in God that allowed him to stand strong.

Now that I think about it, Forrest Gump was at least half right: we don't know the forces headed our direction. But we know who does, and you can't make a cheap analogy out of that.

[A freelance writer, Erin Parker is working on her Masters in Marriage and Family Therapy]

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PICK OF THE LITTER

☆**John Davis**
This guy's second solo album is absolutely the bomb! After leaving indie cult status legends Superdrag, he recorded a fantastic solo album that was released on Word's Rambler Records label. He got out of that deal and has since reunited with Superdrag (who just self-released a dandy new album, *Industry Giants*), but during the process of all these new things he went into 606 Studio with Nick Raskulinecz and recorded probably his best work yet – *Arigato!* While he played all the instruments on his first solo album, he gave up the drum stool to none other than Yogi Watts (Demon Hunter) for this fast-paced alternative rock album. Ironically (considering Raskulinecz's engineering pedigree) it sounds a lot like the Foo Fighters, but don't think second rate; think better than the last two Foo Fighters albums (easily). Once again, it's an honest collection of songs that come from a heart happy and rejoicing in his newfound love for Jesus, as well as a sobering look at life in general. This is a primo album that belongs in stores everywhere, but you might only find it online for now. (Doug Van Pelt)
myspace.com/johndavis

Astellaway
Fun female-fronted pop-rock with big chant-along choruses.
myspace.com/astellaway

Midnight To Twelve
Big radio rock with big, husky voice (a little higher than Nickelback/Kutless).
myspace.com/m212live

A Current Affair
Strong, crisp, melodic post-hardcore with straight-up lyrics about faith.
myspace.com/acurrentaffair

Filmspeed
A straight-up fun band for caffeine-fed teens. (fka No One Goes Home)
myspace.com/filmspeedband

Resin
Fast and dirty rock, reminiscent of Nickelback meets The Cult.
resinrocks.com

Ryan Calhoun
Very ccm radio friendly, but creative hooks showcase his voice well.
myspace.com/ryancalhounmusic

☆**Dremnt The End**
Extremely tight and slick rock band with a lot of Brit pop attitude.
myspace.com/dremnttheend

Staggerford
Solid ambient rock band that knows how to write good songs.
staggerford.com

Altruist
Brutal heavy and scary metal with long, quiet intro's. Production is fair.
myspace.com/altruistprog

Ikon-X
Highly unusual, intense multi-instrumental doomy prog rock w/Latin vocals.
talkingmusic.info

Curb Squirrels
Back from obscurity with more punchy pop punk tunes.
myspace.com/curbsquirrelsrock

☆**Willowfair**
This couple (Ryan & Mandy Bibza) write & perform gorgeous, epic songs.
willowfair.com

Topherman
Dashboard Confessional-esque music that's part worship/part personal.
tophermanband.com

You The Symphony
Bouncing, uptempo rock reminiscent of The Red Jumpsuit Apparatus.
myspace.com/youthesymphony

Jerry Oliver
Rich, full-sounding background textures accompany smart pop/rock tunes.
jerryoliver.com

Happy Golovely
Strong piano-based rock from Cedar Rapids, IA. Get ready to clap your hands.
happygolovely.com

Deadringers Guild
Furious, slightly technical, hit-you-over-the-head metal from Panama City, FL.
deadringersguild.com

Dewey Lybecker
Great voice to accompany these light-hearted and well crafted alt-rock ballads.
deweylybecker.com

Cry To The Blind
A 5-piece metal band from Rochester, NY that's part Red/part Tool influenced.
myspace.com/crytotheblind

☆**Jack London**
This quintet brilliantly crafts sweet melodies in tension w/aggressive, raw rock.
myspace.com/thejacklondon

Aethera
Hellacious, technical death metal mixes with hardcore very well.
aetheramusic.com

The Tug Fork River Band
Now signed to Wounded Records, they writhe in their Southern Rockness.
myspace.com/thetugforkriverband

☆**Shirock**
Literally, the complete package. Quality songs, vocals, and instrumentation. Imagine a filled-out rock band going after shiny Jack's Mannequin hooks.
shirock.net

Jesse Cale
Fun-tastic electro-pop with keen sense of melody and hooks.
myspace.com/jessecalemusic

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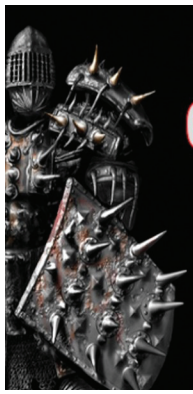

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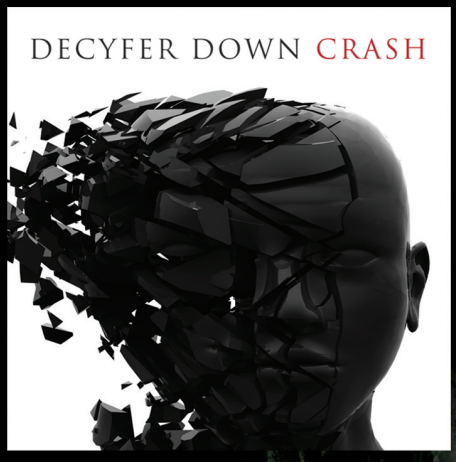

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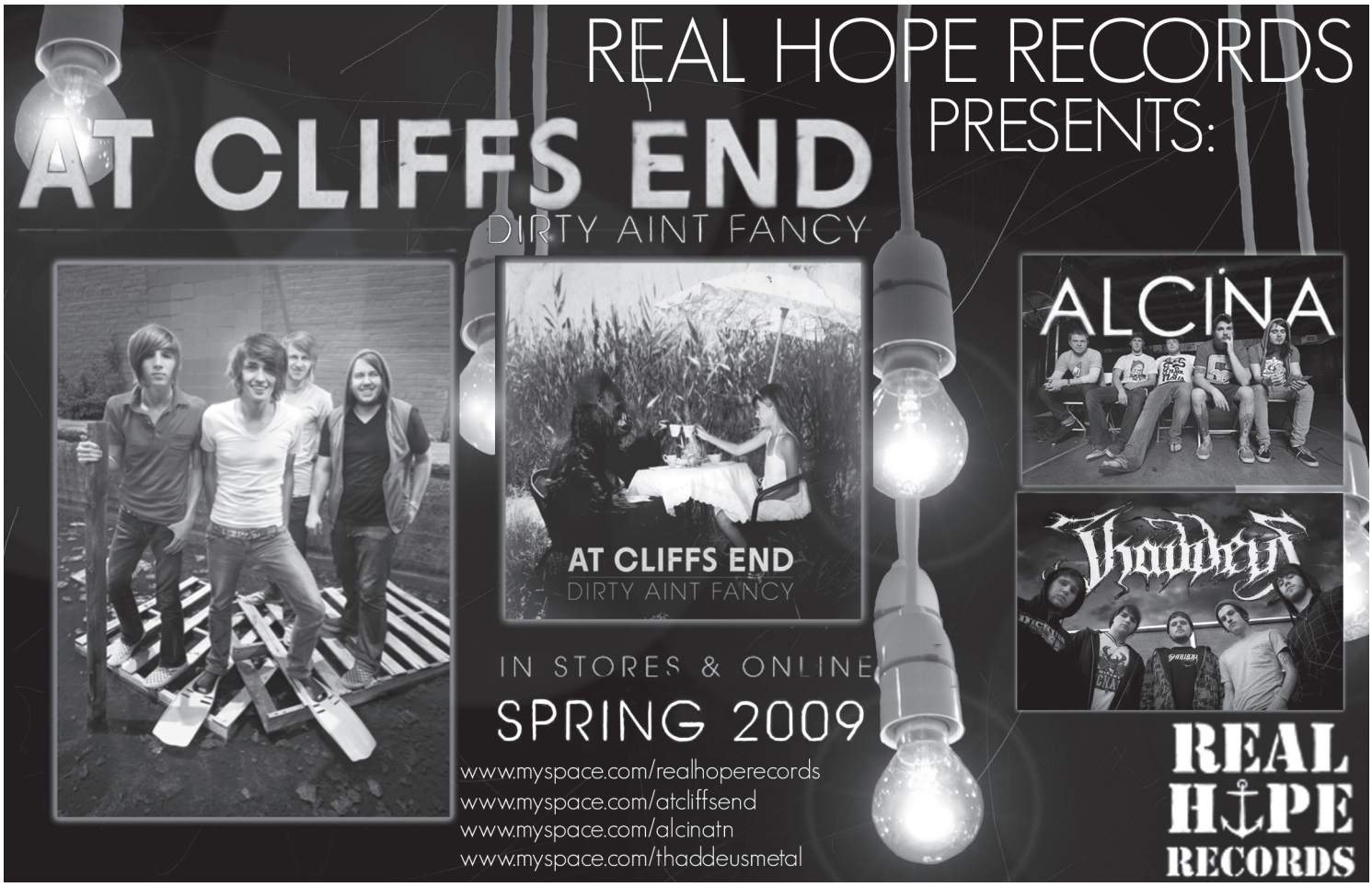
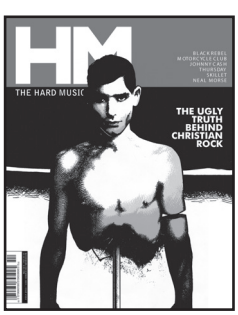


HM BACK ISSUES: READ 'EM WHILE YOU CAN

#114
20th Anniv Issue S.E.

Payable On Death
Disciple
MxPx
Every Time I Die Says
TFK
Robert Randolph
Damien Jurado
Headphones
History of C.Rock
History of C.Metal
History of HM mag



#104
The Ugly Truth Behind Christian Rock

Johnny Cash
Black Rebel Motorcycle Club
Thursday Says
Skiller
Neal Morse
The Huntingtons
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2004 predictions...
Virgin Black

#94
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FSF/Dashboard show
Frank Lenz
Sanctifica

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A Plea For Purging
Impending Doom
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The Red Jumpsuit Apparatus
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2008 Readers' Poll
Brave Saint Saturn
The Ascendicate
Hope For Today
Decyfer Down

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PARTIAL LIST OF AVAILABLE BACK ISSUES:

#088 Jul/Aug '08 **Zao**, Luti-Kriss, **The Brothers Martin** (yes!), The Alarm, FSF
#091 Sep/Oct '01 **P.O.D.**, **Dashboard Confessional**, DA, One 21, Embodyment
#098 Nov/Dec '02 **Blindside**, Dream Theater Says, **Embodyment**, Lost Dogs
#110 Nov/Dec '04 So&SoSays Special, In Flames, **Lamb of God**, Throwdown, **Slipknot**
#111 Jan/Feb '05 **Comeback Kid**, Showbread, Anberlin, **Taking Back Sunday Says**
#112 Mar/Apr '05 **Norma Jean**, Extol, Starflyer 59, **Eisley**, Far-Less, Scorpions Says
#115 Sep/Oct '05 **Blindside**, Mortal Treason, John Davis, **Project 86**, The Locust Says
#116 Nov/Dec '05 **No Innocent Victim**, Demon Hunter, **My Chemical Romance Says**
#119 May/Jun '06 **Underoath**, Project 86, Danielson, **Bleeding Through Says**
#121 Sep/Oct '06 **Norma Jean**, Showbread, **mewithoutYou**, Buckcherry Says
#125 May/Jun '07 **The Chariot**, BTA, **Vlrgin Black**, Skinny Puppy Says, **Chevelle**
#126 Jul/Aug '07 **Project 86**, MxPx, **The Almost poster**, Nodes, **Seventh Star**
#127 Sep/Oct '07 As I Lay Dying, **Paramore**, ABR, As Cities Burn, **Still Remains**
#128 Nov/Dec '07 **Demon Hunter**, Emery, **TDWP**, Chris Cornell Says, Spoken
#129 Jan/Feb '08 **Thrice**, Pillar poster, **Korn Says**, Inked In Blood, **A Plea for Purging**
#130 Mar/Apr '08 **The Myriad**, Shiny Toy Guns Says, **Leeland**, Children 18:3
#131 May/Jun '08 **Showbread / P.O.D.** (flip cvr), Soul Embraced, **Larry Norman** trib.
#132 Jul/Aug '08 **War of Ages / Kutless** (flip), Means, **The Famine**, Stooges Says
#133 Sep/Oct '08 **Underoath / Anberlin** (flip), Showdown, **Norma Jean**, HIM Says
#134 Nov/Dec '08 **Disciple / Becoming the Archetype** (flip), Trenches, **FF5 poster**
#135 Jan/Feb '09 **Red /** The Almost, **Demon Hunter**, Crimson Moonlight, **Anathallo**

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